

READER

*the*

BOOKS

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## THIS WEEK ON CHICAGOREADER.COM

# Obama CBA demands housing ordinance amid multiple crises

Fearing displacement of longtime south-side residents, activists with the Obama Community Benefits Agreement want the city to preserve land for affordable housing. We tell their story in a multimedia, cross-platform collaboration with SoapBox Productions and Organizing that features a microdocumentary, podcast episode, and editorial piece as part of SoapBox Action Works.





# CITY LIFE



## STREET VIEW

### You do you

Authenticity comes first for artist Muhammad Naqee.

By ISA GIALLORENZO

"I have been more interested in fashion in the past few years," says visual artist Muhammad Naqee. "I have so much respect for fashion designers. It's so much tedious thinking and discipline." Naqee, 30, is also a designer himself—he makes jewelry, bags, and hats, and often customizes his own clothing. On the day he was photographed, he was sporting a pair of Yeezy slides on which he painted his two older sisters as demons. He was also wearing rings and a necklace he created, a mask with a colorful camouflage he designed, and a T-shirt on which he wrote "My life is ending." "It's a realistic reminder that we're always closer to death," he explains. "Everything is slipping, slowly but surely. It's not anything negative, though."

Naqee's outfit also included many gifts, such as zebra pants he got from his ex-girlfriend, a shirt given by a gallerist in Pilsen, and a Burberry bag given by his aunt. The latter is an ex-

ample of the luxury items composing his look, in addition to a Chanel ring, Gucci bracelet, and tiny diamonds drilled on his teeth. "I like the top main designers, and right now I have so much respect for Kanye West," he says. "I think he's hilarious, and so talented! He can tamper with a bit of everything and actually make it cool. I don't take his crazy antics too seriously. I think he's honestly one of the best artists that ever lived."

He subscribes to a similar philosophy as West when it comes to style: "Do exactly what you wanna do at all times. Do what makes you happy, because then you'll get the true authentic result from yourself, and people are always gonna see that. People can always feel your authenticity. Always wear what you want. If you're honest, you'll receive the energy you want." ■

See Naqee's art on Instagram at @naqeespaintings.

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# FOOD & DRINK



## COOKBOOK FEATURE

### Cookies keep you healthy, soup makes you sane

Two compilations about cooking and community from Belt Publishing

By **MIKE SULA**

I wonder if one day we'll be able to correlate a second surge in Chicago COVID-19 cases to the fact that five months into the pandemic, Lincoln Park got sick of its own cooking. If it turns out June's reopening of bars and restaurants is even partly to blame for another wave of tragedy, I'm gonna blame the sourdough bros who traded their boules for Corona buckets this summer.

Of course cooking isn't the problem. Cooking has been one of the few reliable sources of comfort in this malignant mess. Cooking is an easily solitary activity, but it's inevitable second act, eating, is inherently communal. There's nothing more lonely than eating alone (except drinking alone).

That's why the recent release of two books from Belt Publishing about the inextricable bonds of cooking and community seem like bittersweet timing. But I'm biased.

*The Belt Cookie Table Cookbook* by local food writer Bonnie Tawse studies a unique wedding tradition native to Pittsburgh (my hometown), nearby Youngstown, Ohio, and all the hills and hollows in between. For new immigrants in the early 20th century, wedding cakes were "dear" (as my Gram would say), and so friends

and family would mobilize to produce a kind of pastry potluck: a dessert table laden with a bonanza of cookies and sweets, the surplus usually collected by each guest at the end of the party as a wedding favor.

This tradition hasn't died. Recipes, some more than a century old, have been handed down over generations, even today perpetuating in Facebook groups with tens of thousands of members. Tawse tapped into this culture—just in the nick of real time—on a road trip to the Mahoning Valley Historical Society's Cookie Table and Cocktail Gala at the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Youngstown in February, just before everything went off the rails.

Therein she was confronted with a massive spread of some 8,000 donated cookies, guarded by the Youngstown State University football team's defensive line (to ensure an equal distribution of the wealth). From this single event, Tawse made connections and collected 41 recipes and their family backstories, tested them at home under lockdown, and produced this extraordinary collection of cookies. Buckeyes, Clothespin Cookies, Pecan Tassies, Pizelles, Snowballs—you may know ➔



## FOOD & DRINK

### Stained Glass Cookies BONNIE TAWSE

them by different names, depending on where you're from—but even without photos you can visualize their collective majesty and the labor that makes it possible; e pluribus unum.

The same principle underlies the *Soup & Bread Cookbook* by former *Reader* editor Martha Bayne, in a second edition published under Belt's Parafine Press side hustle. OK, really it's a third incarnation, born out of the Hideout's 12-year-old Soup & Bread event series, founded by Bayne in 2009 and interrupted in March—when everything went off the rails. That first year, Bayne collected recipes from professional and amateur cooks alike (Tawse and myself included), who'd dish their home-cooked soups out of crockpots in front of the stage each Wednesday night, over the years collecting nearly \$100,000 in donations toward Chicago hunger relief efforts. That first spiral-bound collection, designed by former *Reader* art director Sheila Sachs, was released by Surrey/Agate in 2011 in expanded form, filled out with similar stories of the power of soup to build community. Celebrity soups like Doug Sohn's Sausage Chili and Stephanie Izard's Pear, Parsnip, and Pistachio Soup shared equal billing with equally extraordinary potages like artist Derek Erdman's Pizza Soup and radio producer Robin Linn's 40-Watt Garlic Soup. Besides all that, Soup and Bread was—is—always a reliably, mellow good time.

Born in a recession, and now reborn in a pandemic, the pages are likely to inspire pangs of longing in anyone who showed up at the Hideout on a cold Wednesday night with a couple of bucks or a crockpot of liquid gold. I have to believe Soup & Bread will come back (just as I have to believe I haven't plundered my last cookie table), but for now the rerelease of the cookbook can do some good: half the royalties from its sale go to the Greater Chicago Food Depository. The other half will go to grassroots hunger-relief and mutual aid organizations.

Right now, I don't need better reasons to stay inside and make soup and cookies.

### Stained Glass Cookies

Sage Benchwick

The Benchwick family could possibly be the eastern Ohio version of the Von Trapp Family Singers, except the Benchwick talents are apparently in the kitchen, whipping up baked goods. Their skills are best demonstrated each year with their participation and success in the annual Cookie Table and Cocktails

baking contest. In 2020, three generations of Benchwicks had platters of cookies displayed on the enormous cookie table: Rachelle Benchwick, her son Ryan, daughters Carissa and Stephanie, and Ryan Benchwick's daughter, Sage, who baked these cookies and was awarded the title of 2020 Youngest Baker.

2 cups flour  
3/4 cup butter (one and a half sticks), softened  
1/2 cup Life Savers or Jolly Ranchers  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
pinch of salt  
Optional: food coloring for the dough

Unwrap and separate the candies (Life Savers or Jolly Ranchers) by color then place in separate small resealable bags. Crush into bits using a meat mallet; set aside.

Cream the butter and sugar until fluffy; add vanilla. If you would like to create a colored dough, add food coloring now and stir until completely blended. Add flour and salt, then mix by hand until a dough is formed. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough 1/2-inch thick. Use any shaped cookie cutters desired, but you will need the cutters in two sizes: one for the cookie and one smaller to cut out the center "window" where the crushed hard candy will go to make the "glass." (Sage used heart-shaped cookie cutters, and the cookies were dyed in a variety of colors.)

Cut as many of the cookies as you can from the rolled-out dough; place these on an ungreased cookie sheet covered with parchment paper. Using the smaller cookie cutter, cut out the inside shape, carefully peel away the cut piece of dough. You can bake these as mini cookies, without the candy, or set aside and reuse this dough.

Bake the cookies at 350 F for five minutes. Remove from the oven and using a demitasse spoon, carefully fill the hole in the middle of each cookie with the crushed candy, about 2/3 of the way full. (If you overfill, the candy will bleed out on top of the dough.) Return to the oven and bake for about seven to ten more minutes, until cookies are golden brown. Do not transfer cookies yet! Allow the cookies to rest on the cookie sheet so that the liquified candy in the center of each cookie can cool and harden. Once candy has hardened, transfer cookies to a wire rack to cool completely. 

 @MikeSula



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# NEWS & POLITICS



Illinois's Republican congressmen, Darin LaHood, Rodney Davis, Mike Bost, Adam Kinzinger, and John Shimkus, issued a joint statement denouncing Madigan but are mum on Trump. U.S. CONGRESS

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## POLITICS

### ‘Harper Valley hypocrites’

Republicans are outraged over Madigan but silent when it comes to Trump.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

**W**ith all due respect to Republicans and “good-government” civic citizens, I’m not joining your posse, riding out to string up House speaker Michael Madigan, the state’s most powerful Democrat.

Or its former most powerful Democrat. I think we can agree that Governor Pritzker—and maybe even Mayor Lightfoot—have surpassed him.

Last Friday, Madigan took a blow when U.S. attorney John Lausch Jr. announced that Commonwealth Edison had fessed up to having essentially bribed the speaker by doling out do-nothing jobs and contracts to many of his friends and cronies.

In exchange, well, it’s not clear what ComEd got for allegedly bribing Madigan.

The General Assembly—which Madigan

controls—did pass legislation favorable to Commonwealth Edison, including overriding then-Governor Quinn’s veto to pass the Energy Infrastructure Modernization Act in 2011.

But let’s face it, the legislators probably would have done that anyway. I can’t recall the last time the General Assembly took a strong stand against the utility companies—especially in the pre-Pritzker era.

So, if you ask me, ComEd gave Madigan something that they could have gotten without giving him anything. But, of course, no one’s asking me.

For its confession, ComEd gets off fairly free. Yes, they have to pay a fine of \$200 million. But that is chump change to a company worth billions of dollars.

For what it’s worth, Madigan’s spokesman says that Madigan says he did nothing wrong.

Yes, Madigan should step down. But then I thought he should go—or be forced out—after it became clear that he’d ignored staffer Alaina Hampton’s request that he stop another Madigan operative from harassing her.

Clearly, Democratic legislators in this state take my advice almost as much as their aldermanic counterparts in Chicago.

Meanwhile, the Republicans are outraged—outraged I tell you!

The five Republican congressmen from Illinois—Rodney Davis, Darin LaHood, John Shimkus, Adam Kinzinger, and Mike Bost—issued a joint statement, declaring: “The people of Illinois deserve better than Illinois Democrats’ embarrassing, systemic corruption.”

Pardon me while I retch. What a bunch of frauds and phonies. I haven’t seen so many hypocrites since the school board members in Jeannie C. Riley’s classic country hit “Harper Valley PTA”—a song so old that only Madigan, me, and a few other geezers remember it.



In the song, the members of the Harper Valley PTA chide one woman for wearing a miniskirt. Even as they cheat on their wives, drink too much, and knock up their secretaries.

So, yes, the Republicans are all puffed up with outrage over Madigan. But they can't bring themselves to say one word about their leader, Donald Trump, who's committed far worse crimes than Madigan.

Let's run down just a few of Trump's dirty deeds that spring to my mind, in no particular order . . .

Intimidating witnesses, snubbing congressional subpoenas, lying constantly, filing lawsuits to conceal his taxes, firing prosecutors who examine his crimes, firing employees who testify against him. And rape.

Must not forget E. Jean Carroll's allegations that Trump raped her.

And yet, not a word from the Republicans about any of the lawlessness of the miscreant they worship. They're so afraid of one little presidential tweet. They look the other way. And now they lecture us on Madigan's malfeasance. Please.

As for corporate Chicago . . .

Among Madigan's flaws is his law firm, which specializes in property tax appeals. For years, he represented some of Chicago's most prominent downtown landlords in appeals brought before his political allies at the Cook County assessor's office. Is that legal? Yes. Should it be outlawed? Of course.

Madigan's not the only high-ranking Democrat with a flourishing property tax business. Former state senate president John Cullerton and Alderman Ed Burke had them as well.

Where was the outrage from corporate Chicago all these years? Nowhere. Many of the movers and shakers in civic Chicago are located in buildings whose landlords hired Madigan or Cullerton or Burke to lower their property taxes.

The funny thing is, my bet is these landlords probably would have gotten those tax breaks even if they hadn't hired Madigan, Cullerton, or Burke.

It doesn't really take a legal genius to win an appeal from the assessor's office. It doesn't take much more than having the patience and diligence to fill out a bunch of forms.

But I suspect many landlords hired Madigan or Cullerton or Burke not so much to win the tax break as to curry favor with the Big Three. Sort of like ComEd doling out do-nothing jobs to Madigan's cronies.

From time to time, I entertain myself by looking at the big shots who operate out of buildings represented by Madigan, Cullerton, or Burke. It's a fun game to play while you're in quarantine.

A few years ago, I was delighted to discover that the private equity firm of Bruce Rauner—Madigan's archrival—was located in a building represented by Madigan. As was the office of Ken Griffin—the hedge fund billionaire who gave millions to Rauner's campaign.

When I saw that ComEd was represented by Jenner & Block—one of the premier pinstripe law firms in town—I decided, what the hell, let's play the property tax appeal game.

Jenner & Block is located at 353 N. Clark, in a towering, gleaming high-rise whose landlord is represented by Madigan's law firm.

Why am I not surprised?

Look, I've had problems with Madigan as a

speaker. Basically, he worked out a deal with Mayors Daley and Rahm. They let him run the General Assembly and he used his vast powers to make sure they got just about anything they wanted—be it TIF extensions, O'Hare land grabs, Olympic funding, and so forth.

So, I won't kid myself into thinking Madigan was a legislative antecedent to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

But I'll say this for Madigan: when Rauner tried to destroy collective bargaining rights in Illinois, it was Madigan who fought back.

I've no doubt that Rahm and Cullerton would have sold out the unions in a heartbeat had it not been for Madigan. It was Madigan who kept Rauner from doing to Illinois what Scott Walker did to Wisconsin.

And that's probably why the Republicans—and all their corporate cronies—hate him so much.

So no, I won't be joining their posse. To quote Jeannie C. Riley—they're all a bunch of "Harper Valley hypocrites." 

 @bennyjshow

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## NEWS & POLITICS



Sahar Mustafah @ TAMARA HIJAZI

firstborn. So grief takes its toll on her, and that trickles down to the relationship with Afaf. She comes off as incredibly harsh, but what I intend to do with almost everything I write is to have readers understand where characters are coming from. I'm not interested in justifying behaviors. I'm interested in what are the choices that we make, the forces that carry us along? And that can be said for the shooter, which is why I include him. I'm also defying that trope of the Palestinian mother who tends to suffer and is basically abused by a domineering husband.

**That's just one of the ways in which this is not the story readers might expect; did that make it hard to find a publisher?**

In the industry it's important for publishers to package books—they're only letting in certain narratives. Books by Arab American writers are relatively limited; I felt a responsibility. I just didn't want to continue to inflate the stereotypes. I'm heartened by readers who've reached out to say they hadn't read this before.

**Without going into spoiler territory, can you talk about the ending?**

I'm an optimistic person, but I'm also resisting making audiences, particularly white audiences, feel hopeful and good. My endings are always in service to the experiences of my characters. I had rejections with notes about how I needed to drop the shooter, which really infuriated me. I thought it seems like the industry's just going to reject it because they don't want me to tell this story. I don't give the shooter time; I don't allow him a confession. I think it's wrong to even speculate beyond "OK, here's how he became radicalized." I don't have answers. I'm not trying to solve the problems of the world. But I like to think that after reading this a reader is going to have shifted a little bit maybe in their thinking.

**Will we hear more about this family?**

No, at least not for the time being. I just finished a first rough draft of a second novel; it's such a strange time to release a book, in the pandemic. Thank goodness I had this other project. I need to let this book go on its journey among readers, and I need to continue to write. 

 @Deannaisaacs

### BOOKS

## A Palestinian Chicagoan coming-of-age story

Sahar Mustafah's *The Beauty of Your Face* resists making audiences feel good.

By DEANNA ISAACS

Sahar Mustafah's novel, *The Beauty of Your Face*, is the story of Afaf Rahman, the middle child in a Palestinian American family struggling to make its way in Chicago. It's bookended by a terrorist attack on a Muslim school for girls, with final chapters that are likely to leave you discomfited, but the heart of it is a coming-of-age journey among characters both unexpected and recognizable. It's the first novel for Mustafah, whose collection of short stories, *Code of the West*, came out in 2017. (She'll discuss it at a Women & Children First virtual event on August 5 at 7 PM.) Here's an edited version from a phone interview last week.

**Deanna Isaacs:** This is a story steeped in Palestinian American culture, but it's also a real Chicago book; how did that happen?

**Sahar Mustafah:** This is not autobiographical, but the settings are obviously super familiar

to me. I was born in Chicago, and I went to St. Simon the Apostle, on the south side; it was the neighborhood Catholic school. We were the only Arabs and the only Muslims in that school. When I was ten years old we went overseas to Palestine. We were there five years, which was formative and probably the first time I felt like I belonged. There were many expats like me; we all went to an incredible school founded by American Quakers. I came back to Chicago as a sophomore at Gage Park High School, and graduated from there.

**Afaf has trouble at school and more trouble at home; her stomach "knots up" when she thinks about her mother. What's up with that character?**

She's not the kind of mom that a child deserves. I was imagining her as someone incredibly broken. She's displaced from her country when they immigrate, and then she loses her

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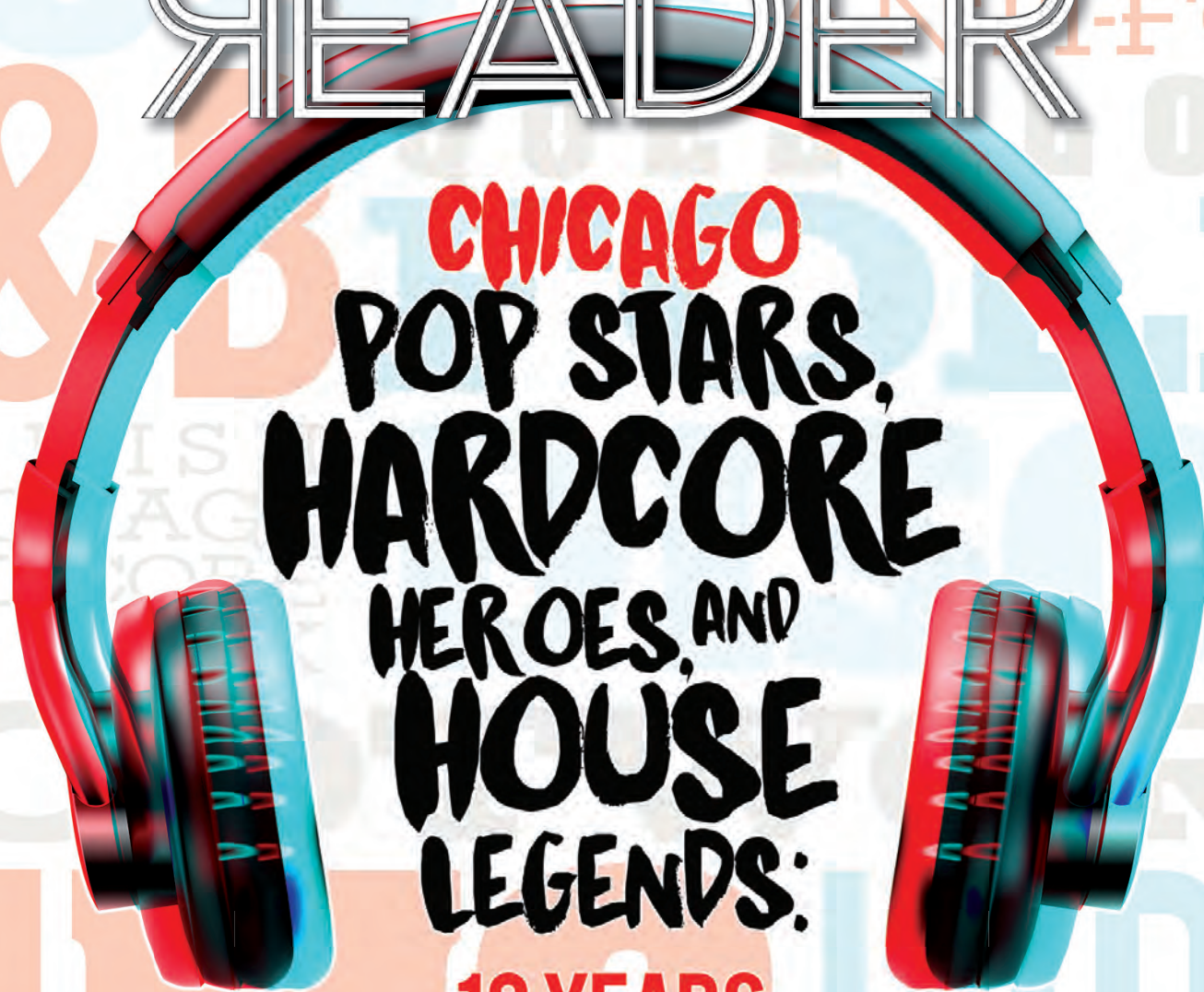
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## IMMIGRATION

# Living in exile

After her husband was deported, Katrina Jabbi moved her family to Gambia to be with him. Then the pandemic happened.

By **CLARISSA DONNELLY-DEROVEN**

**O**n February 14, 2018, Katrina Jabbi and her husband Buba needed a distraction. Buba had a meeting with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, the next day.

The Jabbis lived in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. They both were off work, Katrina from her Amazon store and Buba from his job as a long-haul truck driver. They dropped their five-year-old daughter, Nalia, at school, and left their one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Aisha, with a babysitter. They bought flowers, candy, and balloons and set up a Valentine's Day party for their daughters on the kitchen table. In the evening, they took the girls out to dinner. Katrina, who was 31 years old, was pregnant with their third child.

After dinner, they drove Nalia to Katrina's mother's house for a sleepover. Usually a drop-off at grandma's was unceremonious. But on this night Katrina did something unexpected. She told Nalia to "turn around and I said, *Go give daddy a hug and say goodnight.*" She now wonders if she had a sense of what was to come.

Anxiety was, of course, the most logical emotion for the family to feel before a check-in with ICE, an agency that had the authority to remove Buba from his home and his family. "I know he didn't sleep well," Katrina said. "He never really did before any of his check-ins, because it's so uncertain. You just never know what is going to happen."

A few months earlier Buba received notice that ICE had bumped his appointment date up by six months, from June 2018 to December 2017. He had to work on the new date, so he contacted the agency to reschedule. They moved his appointment to February 2018. Since Donald Trump took office, the Jabbis had heard stories of immigrants getting detained during these appointments. Any deviation, even a change in date, felt like cause for concern.

On the morning of February 15, Katrina and Buba woke up early to drive the 160 miles from their home to the Milwaukee ICE office. An agent escorted Buba to his appointment while Katrina sat in the waiting room. Katrina has the kind-but-firm disposition required of a woman with small children, meaning she isn't easily rattled or upset. But she started to worry. She watched the hands tick on a clock in the waiting room. It felt like the process was taking longer than usual. Then she got a text from her husband: "I'm going to the Gambia."

Katrina called his phone, but he didn't answer. She began to sweat and shake. She felt like she was going to pass out. When Buba finally picked up, he said, "They're taking me."



Katrina recalled later that an officer told her that she couldn't be on her phone in the waiting room. She made her way downstairs to the lobby. Another officer handed her Buba's wallet, car keys, and wedding ring. Katrina asked if she could see her husband, but was told that wouldn't be possible. "What am I going to tell my kids?" she yelled.

The February 15 check-in with ICE was Buba's 14th. At the time, he was one of 2.6 million immigrants on ICE's "non-detained docket," a system that requires people to check in with the agency at varying intervals. People on the non-detained docket either still have cases working their way through the backlogged immigration court, or they've received a deportation order that the government, for some reason, can't execute. Buba was on the latter track.

Buba had lived in the United States for 23 years. He arrived in August of 1995 on a tourist visa, a year after a military coup in Gambia. His visa allowed him to remain in the country for a year, but he overstayed.

He met Katrina in November of 2009 on a Greyhound bus and it was "love at first sight." "I'll never forget when he got off the bus. It was almost like my soulmate was leaving me." Katrina punctuates the melodrama with a laugh. "I remember looking out the window like I didn't want to be away from him." They kept in touch and a few months later, "I packed my bags." Katrina is a U.S. citizen, born and raised in rural Wisconsin. She has an endearing, nasally midwestern accent that comes out when she says words like *bag*. "I put my stuff in storage, and I went to drive with him in his truck."

When they first started dating, Katrina knew Buba was having issues with his status but, "Did I understand exactly what? Absolutely not. I had no clue or understanding of what a green card was, what removal proceedings were." Together they moved into a condo in Atlanta. Katrina was headstrong, and Buba could mellow her out. She was white and Christian, he was Black and Muslim. They learned about each other's faith, and also found space to make jokes. Katrina laughed as she remembered asking Buba if she could pray over him. He brushed her away, telling her, lovingly, "Get your Jesus hands off of me!"

In 2010, Buba's case went to immigration court in Atlanta. Judge Jonathan Pelletier had spent 16 years as an attorney for the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the agency that managed immigration before ICE. After ICE's creation in 2003, Pelletier

served as the assistant chief counsel for the Department of Homeland Security, the agency that houses ICE, in Atlanta. During his first few years on the bench, he denied 88 percent of asylum claims. Buba wasn't applying for asylum, but Atlanta immigration judges have a reputation as being some of the harshest in the country. "I probably wouldn't practice immigration law if I was [in Atlanta]," Laureen Anderson-Stepanek, an immigration attorney who worked on Buba's case, said. Buba was "dealing with a really hostile court," she added.

Pelletier ordered Buba deported. Buba came home and told Katrina he'd received "final orders of removal," the legal term for deportation. Buba reserved his right to appeal the decision, which meant he couldn't be deported for at least 30 days. There was also a logistical issue: Gambia was not issuing travel documents for its citizens to return, meaning the U.S. could not actually deport Buba. He knew this. So he decided to live his life as if nothing had changed.

Six months after the deportation order, Buba was on a job driving through Louisiana when the taillight on his truck burned out. Police officers pulled him over, ran his name through the system, and discovered that he had a final order of removal. Buba was detained. Katrina couldn't afford their condo on her own, so she gathered their belongings and moved to a cheaper place. She made sure to keep track of his immigration documents, anything that could one day prove useful.

ICE released Buba from immigration detention after six months. ICE still couldn't obtain travel documents from Gambia, so the agency let him out, but he wasn't free. They put him on an order of supervision, the immigration version of parole. He'd need to check in with immigration agents as often as they requested.

For the first year, he reported every three months. Then it dropped to four months, then six months, then nine months, then once a year. He was required to tell ICE if he'd moved or switched jobs within 48 hours of the change. During check-ins, he had to answer questions about his "nationality, circumstances, habits, associations, and activities." Buba also needed to ask ICE for permission to work or move outside of Georgia.

In 2012, Buba and Katrina had their first child. The next year, they got married and moved to Wisconsin to be closer to Katrina's family. Marriage, they thought, might provide a pathway for Buba to become a citizen. Katrina filed an I-130 petition; if granted,





“There’s  
no way you  
can prepare  
yourself for  
this. None.  
It’s like a  
grieving  
process.  
You feel like  
that person  
died.”

—Katrina Jabbi

Buba would begin the process to be a permanent resident, based on his status as the husband of an American citizen. The couple had an interview with an officer from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. USCIS is housed within the Department of Homeland Security, and administers adjustments of immigration status to those who are eligible but doesn’t carry out immigration law enforcement.

USCIS approved the application in August 2015. What Katrina and Buba didn’t know was that USCIS had no jurisdiction over his case. Since an immigration judge had ordered him removed, in order to make changes to Buba’s status through USCIS, they first needed to get the Atlanta court to reopen his case. “[Reopening a case] is not something that the court likes to do,” Anderson-Stepanek said, “But that particular court was even less likely to do it.”

For a person who’s been ordered deported, the process of changing immigration status through a marriage is profoundly complicated. With stacks of different cases laid out on the desk in front of her, Anderson-Stepanek began our interview last year by saying, “Let me give you some Immigration 101.” If a person is deported or ordered deported, but they entered the nation with inspection at a port of entry and they’re married to a U.S. citizen, usually there’s a three-step process that can put them on a path to citizenship. First they ask the court to reopen their case. Then they submit waivers to be pardoned for an unlawful presence in the country and to request reentry.

The final step requires travel to a native country. Because Gambia refused to issue travel documents to its citizens, Buba couldn’t leave the U.S. “He literally couldn’t participate in that process,” Anderson-Stepanek said.

“We were trying to save money,” Katrina said. “I wasted almost like, honestly, a whole year doing that. And then we paid fees for that. And nothing came out of it.”

In 2018, after agents took her husband into custody, Katrina drove to an already scheduled appointment with an immigration attorney. The attorney said her only option was to petition the court for an emergency stay of removal, a process that would prevent the government from deporting Buba. It cost \$1,500. Katrina needed to prove that her husband’s deportation would cause the family “irreparable harm.” Deportation alone does not constitute irreparable harm. “It’s absolutely traumatizing,” Katrina said. “I honestly believe that we’re all going

through post-traumatic stress disorder right now.”

Katrina enlisted others to write letters to the court to vouch for Buba’s character, and to try and demonstrate the pain that would come from his deportation. One friend spoke about how Buba welcomed her and her children into his home when she was fleeing an abusive relationship. Katrina’s own dad wrote about the financial and emotional burden Buba’s deportation would cause Katrina. Buba’s brother wrote about the potential for violence or ostracization he and Katrina could face in Gambia because of their interracial and interfaith marriage. Katrina signed her letter two days after Buba was taken into custody. “It was hard for me to even be strong for our children,” she wrote. “I am pregnant, and I could barely nourish myself. I am literally and physically sick.”

The attorney cited the letters, the pregnancy, and the depression Katrina has struggled with since she was a teenager, but the court denied the request.

Before Buba was deported, Katrina took the children to visit him at the jail. “I told my oldest, I was like, *You know, daddy is from a different country. And he doesn’t have the right papers.*” As she recounted this story a year later, Katrina said this last sentence almost like a question. How could she begin to tell a five-year-old that her father had disappeared because of paperwork? “I had to explain it really simple,” she said. “*He’s not a bad person, but they want to take him back to his country.*”

About a week after Buba was taken into immigration custody Katrina started a GoFundMe page. She raised almost \$14,000, which helped make up for the immediate loss of Buba’s income, but telling her story also elicited hate, as swarms of racist posts flooded her social media feed. “It was just really cruel,” she said.

Even with the influx of money from the GoFundMe, Katrina couldn’t afford to stay in their home in Wisconsin Rapids. She packed up what she could into a shipping container, sold the house, and moved into her father’s basement. The children didn’t comprehend the permanence of Buba’s absence. When Christmas came, Nalia said she was excited because it was a special holiday which meant “daddy was coming home.” She said the same when the baby, Noble, was born in November. When Katrina went into labor she called her husband, but Gambia is six hours ahead of Wisconsin. He was asleep.

“When people speak of mental illness and depression, you know, I’ve had my bouts

of it growing up,” Katrina said. “But like, this was *some* depression. I mean, it was crippling, where I could barely function. Some days I could barely eat. And then you have to take care of yourself because you’re pregnant and you’re thinking, *Oh my gosh, is this baby gonna make it?*” She continued. “There’s no way you can prepare yourself for this. None. Like financially, mentally, emotionally, physically. It’s like a grieving process. You feel like that person died.”

Katrina didn’t know what to do. She googled “husband deported,” “deportee wife,” “moving with deported husband,” searching for people in situations similar to hers. She didn’t think anyone could really understand what she was experiencing. But soon she found a whole Facebook world of women who, unfortunately, knew exactly what she was going through. Women in mixed-status families who experienced deportation and were deciding whether to have a long-distance relationship or uproot their lives in America and move.

She introduced herself in the groups and many offered to talk on the phone with her. They told her about their own decisions to stay or to go. Katrina said she wouldn’t have felt certain enough to make the choice to move to Gambia had she not met the other women who’d already made that move. “[Our kids] deserve to have their father in their life,” she said.

In June of 2018, when she was five months pregnant, Katrina traveled alone to Gambia for the first time. She would spend three weeks envisioning a life there for herself and her children. She decided that the Jabbis would keep fighting to bring Buba back to America, but they’d do it from Gambia.

Katrina packed the girls’ favorite things—cupcake mix, sugary cereal, Play-Doh, coloring books—and worried about leaving their home and friends. She warned Nalia and Aisha that in Gambia there aren’t so many water parks and rollercoasters. “We can make our own fun,” Nalia assured her mom.

“We forget that there’s a whole other family waiting for us,” Katrina said, referring to Buba’s parents and siblings. “They have the same feelings and emotions as my family over here. And it’s fair that they get to see their family, their grandkids and their nieces and nephews. And my husband deserves to meet his son and see his children.”

In 1907 Congress passed the Expatriation Act, which stripped American women of their citizenship if they married noncitizen men. In 1915, the Supreme Court ruled that women knew when they married non-



citizen men that they'd lose their citizenship. Over the next few decades, the Expatriation Act lost its power as it generally fell out of fashion to write laws that explicitly tied women's personhood to their husbands.

But like the women of the early 20th century, many women who today join their deported husbands outside of the U.S. don't see their lives abroad as much of a choice at all. They refer to themselves as living in exile. They argue that by deporting their husbands, the immigration system has forced them to live abroad.

In March 2019, 13 months after her husband's deportation, Katrina packed her three kids and ten boxes into the car and drove four hours to O'Hare International Airport. She strapped her five-month-old son to her front and pushed Aisha in a stroller, with sippy cups, bottles, and baby formula stuffed in its cup holders. Nalia walked by her mom's side. After eight hours in the air, they arrived at Gatwick Airport in London for a six-hour layover, where Katrina rechecked her boxes. She couldn't imagine doing this without the help of a camerawoman and reporter from Matter of Fact TV, who were documenting the journey. Next up was a seven-hour flight.

When the pilot announced they had arrived at Banjul International Airport in Gambia, Katrina felt a wave of relief. She and the girls walked down the stairs into the 90-degree heat, then to the security line. On the other side of a glass window they saw Buba, holding a pink bouquet. It was surreal. The moment Katrina had been waiting for was finally here.

The girls ran towards Buba squealing. He squatted and they jumped into his arms. "Africa has been waiting for you," he said. Katrina and Buba hugged and kissed. For the first time, Buba held his son. "Hey," he said. "You're with daddy now."

The children met their grandparents and aunts and uncles and played with their cousins in the family compound in Kotu. They went to the beach. They celebrated Ramadan. But earlier this year, Katrina and Buba also noticed that their baby, Noble, wasn't growing as he should. The doctor suggested he might have a genetic disorder and encouraged the family to take him back to the U.S. to get diagnosed, because in Gambia they didn't have the proper technology. Katrina booked a ticket for March.

Then the first case of coronavirus arrived in Gambia and the country went into a nationwide lockdown. Her flight was canceled. Katrina watched as the numbers of infected

and dying grew each day in the U.S. while in Gambia the caseload stayed low. It seemed like they'd be safer from the virus if they stayed in Africa. But she also considered the reality that borders could be closed for a very, very long time. Their son needed to be seen by a doctor as quickly as possible.

After unsuccessfully contacting several airlines, Katrina's mother called her senator's office and learned about repatriation flights to D.C. that the state department and the U.S. embassies organized for stranded citizens. The flight from Gambia was set to leave in the first week of April. Katrina received a form explaining the repatriation process. In it, the State Department wrote, "the approximate cost of this flight is \$1,900 per passenger—please note that the final cost could be more." The total cost of Katrina's original flight back to the U.S., for her and all three of her children, had been \$1,500. Now she'd be expected to pay the U.S. government \$7,600. She had no other option. To board the flight, passengers needed to sign a promissory note to the government indicating that they'd pay back the amount in full.

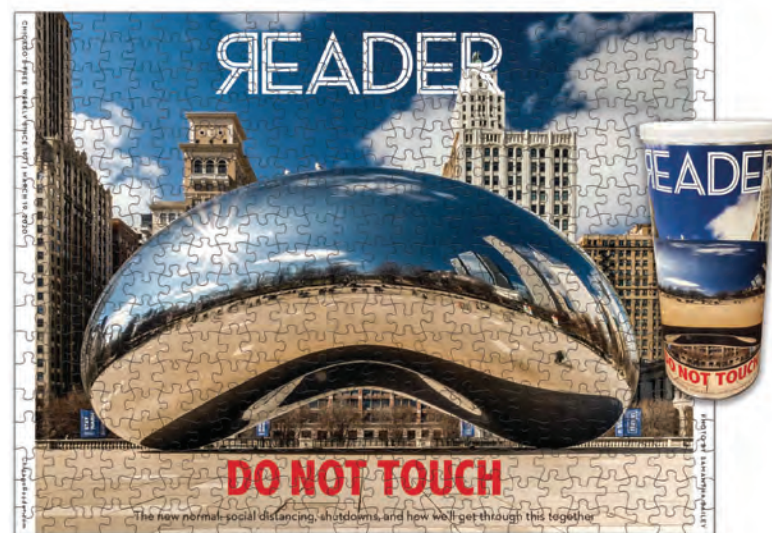
After waiting for nine hours in the airport, she and the children had their temperatures checked and boarded the flight on April 7. Katrina covered her mouth and nose with a scarf and helped her kids do the same with their airline-issued sleep masks. Due to his status as a deportee, Buba wasn't allowed to join. "Our kids begged for him to come with us," Katrina said. "They just don't understand. I've just explained he has to have special papers to come back to America, then they ask more questions." The girls cried at the airport as they said goodbye.

They landed in D.C. in the middle of the night. Katrina's brother, who lives in Virginia, helped arrange a hotel room for the night and a flight the next morning to Wisconsin. She said that no one took their temperatures or told them to quarantine after arrival, but they did anyway.

Things have been slow going as they readjust to living in America and to the reality of lockdowns and social distancing. It's unclear when she and her children will be able to go back to Gambia to see Buba, both because of COVID-19 and because of her new debt with the U.S. government. The promissory note that Katrina signed stipulates that until she has paid off the \$7,600 cost of the flight, she and her children cannot get new passports. Their current ones expire in 2024. 

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## ARTS & CULTURE



### BOOKS

## The Dial's next chapter

How one couple channeled their love for books and each other into running a business

By BRIANNA WELLEN

Heidi Zheng never had plans to run a bookstore. In fact, neither she nor her husband, Peter Hopkins, had any retail experience when they were approached to take over the Dial. But still, it was an opportunity they couldn't pass up. "What a story!" Zheng says. "That's the thing about people who grow up reading too many books, I simply cannot refuse because it's such a good story."

And there's much more to the story: Zheng and Hopkins had their first date at the Dial in the Fine Arts Building in the Loop in December 2018. When deciding where to go Zheng dropped the name of her favorite bookstore with a casual yet trying-to-be-cool "Have you heard of it?" Hopkins had not only heard of it, he built it. A woodworker and friend of the owners, he constructed the bookshelves when the space opened as the Dial in 2017. Six months after their first date, the couple got married and had a party at the bookstore. One month after that, store owners Mary Gibbons and Aaron Lippelt decided to get married themselves and move to Michigan, and they asked Zheng and Hopkins to take over. The two signed an agreement to take on the lease and the business starting on April 1, 2020.

"It's sort of hard to separate all the nervousness and excitement I feel around owning a bookstore from all that's attached to the current moment," Hopkins says.

Navigating the choppy and uncertain waters of doing business during a pandemic is daunting enough for a seasoned shop owner, and for a pair with no experience it could easily be enough to call it quits. But Zheng and Hopkins are keeping the Dial afloat thanks to support from Chicago's independent bookstore community, loyal Dial devotees, and the couple's love for books and the store that brought them together.

"They met and married in a bookstore, so I don't need to tell you that they love books," Gibbons says. "But their personalities really compliment each other in a way that I think makes them good business partners in addition to good life partners. Peter is more precise, methodical, and analytical and really has a handle on the business end of things in a way that Aaron nor I never did. Heidi has a real passion and creativity that will draw readers into the store and towards books they might not find on their own. I can't wait to see how they improve on the shop in the years to come."

## LGBTQ Fiction

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## ARTS & CULTURE

Peter Hopkins and Heidi Zheng  COURTESY THE DIAL BOOKSHOP

Zheng grew up in China where she started reading around the age of four. Books became her entire identity, the way she understood society and learned about the world around her. When she was 14, her family moved to the United States. Self-conscious about her accent and nervous about interacting with other students or teachers, she used books to learn and perfect English. “The last book I ever read in Chinese before I left the country was *Lolita*,” Zheng says. “It was very inappropriate, I don’t know why my parents let me read it, at Lolita’s age no less. But I just kind of cross-referenced the Chinese edition and English edition side-by-side with words I didn’t know.” Soon after, when Zheng was a junior in high school, Jeffrey Eugenides’s novel *The Marriage Plot* came out, and she took that and ran. The book takes place at Brown University in the 80s, and Zheng wrote down every reference to an author or a book and created her own reading list of works related to continental philosophy—Nietzsche and Heidegger among them.

“It’s not lost on me that these are all dead white men,” Zheng says. “But I think that’s also the function of being a first-generation immigrant myself is that a lot of the information I consciously absorbed was to help me assimilate and have the cultural currency to be able to hold a conversation in the institution that is the university.”

In the years since, Zheng has diversified her own reading list, and now as the person in charge of the Dial she is working to do the same for her customers. A lot of attention has been given to Instagram, where every Saturday she posts five weekend picks, providing a range of books. “I pay a lot of attention to the genre split and the gender and the national origin of the authors and try to squeeze in at least one translated work or work based in non-Western settings just to kind of diversify what our readers can see,” Zheng says. “And it’s not like checking off a box, like we gotta have one Black female, we gotta have one Indigenous person. I also pay attention to the content, too, because I know that not everyone wants to keep reading autofiction or autobiographical work. I know there are a lot of good scholars of Asian descent who don’t write about Asian stuff at all, and I want to feature those as well to show just another way that diversity is not just about amplifying voices talking about themselves, those voices are able to tell other stories as well.”

Another online initiative has been the monthly book club in which subscribers receive

a mystery book and then talk about it via Zoom. The surprise aspect, Zheng says, really allows her to give readers something they would not normally read on their own. And the results have been overwhelmingly positive—not only were there more subscribers than books originally ordered, but it’s also become clear from the discussions that readers have loved the books and sought out more works by those authors or similar stories.

The two books Zheng recommends to customers now are *The Undocumented Americans* by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio and *Minor Feelings* by Cathy Park Hong, both works that offer a multidimensional and very redeeming depiction of the immigrant experience. Similarly, Hopkins recommends reading the play *Kim’s Convenience* by Ins Choi, about a Korean family who opens a convenience store in Canada and the tension that develops between the parents, who fondly remember Korea, and their children, who are ready for a new life. And former Dial owner Gibbons, who started her first garden in quarantine, recommends *Fermented Vegetables* by Christopher and Kirsten Shockley, an intro to the art of fermentation.

As the Dial has worked to find its footing, the support from other shops in the city has been instrumental. “Here in Chicago the indie bookstore community is extremely supportive and helpful,” Zheng says. “There’s a lot of resource sharing and guidance and a lot of warmth, too. People would approach us first and be like, you’re obviously new and this is a weird time, so this is what you’re supposed to do.”

The Dial opened its doors for in-person business on July 6, and despite a power outage on the first, very hot day, things have been running fairly smoothly. Zheng and Hopkins are working hard to ensure all social distancing regulations are being observed, but have still had as many customers as they can in at a time. Future plans for the store include an initiative to support local authors and cultivate that community, as well as expanding the book club program and eventually selling more custom library furniture like the shelves Hopkins built for the store. For now, they are finding delight in being able to share their love of books and return to a sense of relative normalcy.

“It’s really nice to have those interactions,” Zheng says. “It’s really nice to our regulars and put faces to the names, but it’s also nice to kind of see that like surprise and joy on people’s faces when they walk in and realize it’s a bookstore.” 

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## ARTS & CULTURE



LIT

### The Quaranzine scene

How Chicago zinemakers are adapting to the pandemic

By MEGAN KIRBY

In May 2020, the Quimby's Bookstore Instagram started going live with a New Stuff This Week video. Store manager Liz Mason sits next to a stack of zines, comics, and graphic novels. The colorful Quimby's shelves spread behind her. As she holds new titles towards the camera, comments start rolling in: "Miss you," and "Love Quimby's," and heart-eye emojis.

"It fills the void that is left by not being able to look at zines in the store," Mason says. "Not just drumming up sales, but continuing to create the community that we love with zines."

No thanks to COVID-19, all Chicago zine fests and events are canceled. Quimby's Bookstore—a hub of zine culture in the city—is open for limited hours, online orders, and curbside pickup. From hand-stapling bindings to trading minicomics across festival tables, zine culture exists in physical ephemera and thrives in real-world interactions. Zines provide a space to explore outsider art, counterculture, niche fandoms, and pretty much any obscure subject under the sun. And as the simplest human interactions go online, zines also provide a way to spread information off the grid. So how are

zinemakers existing in the pandemic world of Zoom meetings, delivery apps, FaceTime calls, and endless scrolling? In Chicago, they're adapting new ways to create, teach, connect, and share their art and writing.

Andrea Pearson self-publishes the autobiographical comics series *No Pants Revolution*, and she had a busy summer of midwest zine and comics fests scheduled. When those plans derailed, she started interacting with digital zine fests through hashtags—posting her work, leaving comments, and trading and selling zines through the mail.

Chicago Zine Fest usually takes place at Plumbers Union Hall, but this year the fest went digital on May 15 and 16. That weekend, Pearson left minizines in Little Free Libraries all over town and posted their locations to the #czf2020 hashtag. "I hope people find them and get a good chuckle out of 'em," she says.

Still, a lack of zine fests was a hit to Pearson's productivity. "The first two months of this were so paralyzing," she says. "My normal way of making zines is, 'Oh, I have to get this done by Chicago Zine Fest.' Without that motivator,

Andrea Pearson has been sharing her zines using Little Free Libraries all over town. COURTESY ANDREA PEARSON

it's been a little tougher." She plans to release *No Pants Revolution 5* in August.

Since March, more zine events have turned to a digital existence. Zine Club Chicago, which is hosted by Cynthia Hanifin and usually meets at Quimby's, has been meeting over Zoom to discuss zines on themes like "Fun-Sized" and "Power to the People." Saturday Night Drink 'n' Draw, hosted by Alex Nall, had several digital drawing events—including a figure drawing session where a model posed over webcam.

Local comics artist, teacher, and activist Bianca Xunise put on a Comics as Resistance workshop for *Believer*. The digital format drew a huge audience—around 500 people tuned in—but it also allowed for white supremacists to crash the event.

When *Believer* asked Xunise if she wanted to pause or end the event, she said she wanted to keep going. "I know for non-Black people it may be shocking to experience [racism] when it's not part of your everyday," she says. "But, at this point in my life, I've learned to not give it power and just keep going."

After the workshop, participants posted their work with Xunise tagged. As for her own work, Xunise is glad for the chance to slow down. Staying home means she saves money and has more time to consider which jobs she really wants to take. "Between COVID and the Black Lives Matter protests, it's forced a lot of Black creatives to ask: What do I really want to be saying?" she says.

And for shoppers who miss zine browsing in person, Quimby's has a creative solution. For \$25, online shoppers can buy a "Qustomized" Quarantine Zine Pack curated and mailed out by Mason herself. At checkout, customers can list their interests to guide her selection. The most requested subjects? Cats, pizza, and "witchy stuff." One request shared anonymously on the Quimby's Instagram included "old horror movies, vaporwave, history, VHS, [...] The Velvet Underground, uhhh I also eat a lot of pierogis."

Zine packs provide some counterculture reading materials, of course, but they also help a small business and keep the community alive. "People post their zine packs and say, 'I feel so seen,'" says Mason. "It was this really therapeutic moment for them, and for me. It feels like the pinnacle of my almost 20 years of zine training." 📖

🐦 @megankirby





## LIT

### 25 local books to stock your shelves

Add these new reads by and about Chicagoans to your list.

## OUT NOW

**All Hack by Dmitry Samarov** (self-published)  
The *Reader* contributor's illustrated memoir about driving a cab in Boston and Chicago

**The Beauty of Your Face by Sahar Mustafah** (W. W. Norton & Company)  
This debut novel looks at the aftermath of a violent attack on a Muslim school in the Chicago suburbs and the principal who must pick up the pieces.

**Between Everything and Nothing by Joe Meno** (Counterpoint Press)  
The author's first nonfiction book, following two young men from Ghana and their quest for asylum

**Everywhere You Don't Belong by Gabriel Bump** (Algonquin Books)

A novel following a young man growing up in South Shore and coming to terms with the idea of home

**The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price by Rae Linda Brown** (University of Illinois Press)  
About Florence B. Price, who lived in Chicago and was the first Black woman composer in the U.S. to have her music played by a major orchestra

**Hood Feminism by Mikki Kendall** (Viking)  
A collection of essays asking readers to reconsider what feminism is and how they've shown up for women of color

**The King of Confidence: A Tale of Utopian Dreamers, Frontier Schemers, True Believers, False Prophets, and the Murder of an American Monarch by Miles Harvey** (Little,

Pilsen Community Books ALEXANDER GOULETAS

Brown and Company)  
This nonfiction work digs deep into the legacy of 19th-century Mormon leader and charlatan James Strang.

**The Lost Book of Adana Moreau by Michael Zapata** (Hanover Square Press)  
This author's debut, a mystery novel about a lost science-fiction manuscript

**Pew by Catherine Lacey** (Macmillan)  
A small town takes in a mysterious, silent, androgynous person and tries to uncover their true identity.

**Prison by Any Other Name by Maya Schenwar and Victoria Law** (The New Press)  
An examination of the consequences of prison reform

**Queer Legacies: Stories from Chicago's LGBTQ Archives by John D'Emilio** (University of Chicago Press)  
A deep dive into Gerber/Hart Library's records related to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer-identified people and organizations in the city

**Recipe for Persuasion by Sonali Dev** (HarperCollins)  
The second in a series of rom-com novels putting a unique, modern twist on Jane Austen classics

**Saving Ruby King by Catherine Adel West** (Park Row)  
West's debut novel follows one young woman's life in the aftermath of her mother being killed in her home on Chicago's south side.

**So Forth by Rosanna Warren** (W. W. Norton & Company)  
A new collection from the renowned poet

**The Taste of Sugar by Marisel Vera** (Liveright)  
A novel based in 1898 Puerto Rico on the eve of the Spanish-American War

**Troublemakers: Chicago Freedom Struggles Through the Lens of Art Shay by Erik Gelman** (University of Chicago Press)  
A close look at Chicago's social movements from the 1940s to the '60s through the work of the legendary photographer

**Wow, No Thank You by Samantha Irby** (Vintage)

Laugh-out-loud essays about getting older and being a "cheese fry-eating slightly damp Midwest person" outside of the midwest

## COMING SOON

**JULY 28**  
**Memorial Drive by Natasha Trethewey** (Harper Collins)  
In this memoir the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet reflects on her mother's life and how she grieved when her mother was killed by her stepfather.

**AUGUST 4**  
**The Living Dead by Daniel Kraus and George A. Romero** (Macmillan)  
A new zombie tale started by Romero and finished after his death by Kraus

**AUGUST 11**  
**Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey by Kathleen Rooney** (Penguin Books)  
A novel based on the true story of the relationship between a WWI messenger pigeon and a soldier

**Finna by Nate Marshall** (One World)  
Poetry celebrating the Black voice

**AUGUST 25**  
**The Sprawl by Jason Diamond** (Coffee House Press)  
Essays reconsidering the suburbs as cultural hotspots

**SEPTEMBER 8**  
**The Seventh Mansion by Maryse Meijer** (Macmillan)  
A coming-of-age fantasy novel about humanity's relationship with nature

**SEPTEMBER 22**  
**Maya and the Rising Dark by Rena Barron** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)  
Twelve-year-old Maya must fight dark forces that only she sees in her south-side Chicago neighborhood to bring her father home in this YA fantasy novel.

**OCTOBER 6**  
**Golem Girl by Riva Lehrer** (One World)  
A memoir about living with spina bifida and using art to change the way the world sees people with disabilities



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## ARTS & CULTURE

### BOOKS

## The myth of housing mobility

*The Voucher Promise* chronicles the "illusions" of Section 8.

By MAYA DUKMASOVA

As cities around the country continue to grapple with the economic and social fallout of decades of racist public policy, a new book by Georgetown University sociologist Eva Rosen offers a compelling ethnography of the Section 8 housing voucher program. Though *The Voucher Promise* (Princeton University Press) is focused on a low-income Black neighborhood in Baltimore, its insights apply to Chicago and probably every other segregated American city.

Section 8—now officially called the Housing Choice Voucher program—has emerged in recent decades as the primary vehicle for subsidizing rental housing. Just five million households across the U.S. receive federal housing assistance, and more than half of them are in the private housing market. Where the federal government once allocated funds to cities for building and maintaining public housing, it now offers subsidies to landlords for housing poor people. Tenants pay a portion of their income in rent, while landlords collect the rest from the government. The “failure” of the public housing experiment (now widely understood by experts to have been preventable and even planned) has not resulted in poor people gaining access to less segregated, more resource-rich neighborhoods, however. Rosen’s work adds to a chorus of research findings from the last ten years that have revealed vouchers to be inadequate for promoting housing integration and upward socioeconomic mobility.

While they alleviate the heavy financial burden of housing costs for some of the poorest families, vouchers also help reinforce segregation. Because the value of vouchers is usually calculated using metropolitan-area rental cost averages, the vouchers end up bringing in more money than market rents would to landlords in poorer neighborhoods. This incentivizes landlords to aggressively court voucher holders there. “In a complete reversal of the state policy goals of the program, a program meant to provide a safety net to tenants ends up acting as one for landlords,” Rosen writes. She found that landlords can sometimes get hundreds of dollars per month more from a

tenant with a voucher than from one without.

Thus, voucher holders find themselves at the mercy of landlords, who steer them to units “that deliver the biggest profits, which happen to be in the very neighborhoods from which the voucher might afford families the opportunity to escape.” Since many voucher holders don’t have extra money for security deposits and are operating on the tight deadlines set up by housing authorities, their options are limited and the landlords can easily leverage this by offering units with attractive cosmetic remodels, waiving security deposits, and providing transportation to viewings. “These tactics wrest control and choice away from tenants,” Rosen writes. And, once they have them in their units, “landlords exploit the intricacies of the voucher rules to limit the movement of voucher holders out of their properties.”

Meanwhile, vouchers bring less money than landlords in wealthier, whiter neighborhoods would get from market-rate renters, which adds an economic disincentive on top of racial and class biases against voucher holders there. But finding housing in a lower-income Black neighborhood doesn’t mean voucher holders (who are disproportionately Black) are free of discrimination and class bias.

Rosen’s ethnography of Section 8 is based on the experience of renters, homeowners, and landlords in the Park Heights neighborhood of Baltimore. Like many Black neighborhoods around the country its history is one of de jure segregation and redlining that gave way to blockbusting and white flight. The neighborhood declined as deindustrialization sapped jobs from its residents and various forms of discrimination and disinvestment overlapped to hinder wealth building by the Black homeowners. In recent decades the housing stock has aged and devalued, municipal services have dried up, and the neighborhood has experienced an influx of renters squeezed by market conditions and public policy. While the homeowner and renter classes in the area are overwhelmingly Black, the landlord class is disproportionately white. It’s the voucher holders that are most often



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scapegoated for the decline of the neighborhood, however.

Rosen documents in detail the class divides that exist between homeowners, unassisted renters, and voucher holders (and reminds us, once again, that Black people aren't a monolith). Though her insights are undoubtedly limited by the fact that she's a white woman, her observations about the social dynamics between these groups are crucial to understand for anyone doing community organizing work or advocating for public policy changes in neighborhoods like Park Heights. Like researchers of mixed-income housing in Chicago, Rosen underscores that proximity to higher-income neighbors with more social capital does not translate into tangible benefits for poorer voucher holders. Even when living cheek-to-jowl with better-off homeowners or unassisted renters, voucher holders are often isolated and stigmatized.

Rosen's years of research and months of living in Park Heights lead her to conclude that "the 'choice' of where to live that policy-makers hope to provide to voucher holders is largely an illusion." Indeed by now we should all be on guard when we hear policymakers use the word "choice," especially when new policies purport to offer "choices" to the most marginalized people. "Removing financial constraints to make room for choice is not always enough to allow people to take full advantage of the available options," Rosen writes. She concludes the book with a discussion of possible solutions to the corruptions and shortcomings of the voucher program.

While the narrative, anecdotal parts of the book can feel truncated and lacking in depth and texture, it remains an engaging read. Most compellingly, Rosen offers a moving psychological portrait of her interlocutors, revealing how people cope with neighborhood change and reconcile limited opportunities and chronic disappointments. The mental gymnastics residents of Park Heights undertake to deal with their realities are at stark odds with policymakers' rosy narratives about how people make decisions about where they live and how neighborhood social bonds are formed. Instead, the people we meet in the pages of *The Voucher Promise* share what happens when your only way out of a neighborhood is through the story you tell yourself about it. 

## POETRY CORNER

### The natural world

By Anne K. Ream

It was terrifying, of course  
but there was no shock to it.  
When the knife touches the skin  
it feels inevitable as rain.  
To say a thing is unimaginable is  
an act of imagining.  
Words and images fail  
but the body knows.  
The world had finally caught up with her,  
that was all. The worst had ended  
the worst had yet to begin.  
Violence is ever and always a prelude.

The Buddhists say  
stillness  
The Christians preach  
forgive  
Oprah admonishes  
Just let go  
Even Bob Dylan sings  
Don't Look Back.  
Do they not see?  
We do not cling to the past  
it is the past that cleaves to us.

The real lessons to be learned  
are in the natural world.  
There is no mercy.  
The cruelty, the culling  
is the point.  
You do not overcome  
you persevere.  
Rain is not cleansing,  
it releases the detritus.  
Even in the Redwood Forest  
everything is ugly when falling.  
Dead leaves  
bird carcasses  
a spider's web  
once a glittering mosaic  
suspended between  
breath and air  
now an insect graveyard  
made of tired, tangled silk.

Off the coast of Durban  
a wall that is a wave races towards her  
and sometimes she rides it  
but mostly she dives  
into a silent muffled place  
avoiding the glittering, too-bright chaos above.  
It is hallucinogenic  
and dreamlike where she is  
but she  
is not breathing  
and she  
is not ready to give up on air.

In Glacier she wears  
bear bells to scare away the grizzlies.  
In a mauling she knows to curl into herself  
and play dead  
until the bear, bored with her inertia  
and satiated from a prior kill,  
skulks away.  
No one calls this capitulating to the perpetrator.  
This is the discipline of survival.

She reaches the Mayan ruins atop Volcán San Pedro  
and makes an offering to  
a god she does not believe in  
before realizing that  
coming down from the mountaintop  
is its own form of treachery.  
Is it that she is tired from the journey upward?  
Or is it the fault of the well-worn  
ground beneath her feet?

There is a certain quality of sleep  
under skies that blanket lonely places.  
But at Lake Atitlan  
the roosters crow all night.  
There is mercy in their music.  
Somewhere it is always  
the break of dawn.  
So she sings a prayer  
that is a mantra  
that is a wish.  
I can be kinder to the world  
than the world has been to me.

**Anne K. Ream is the founder of *The Voices and Faces Project*, an award-winning storytelling project, and the author of *Lived Through This*, her memoir of a multi-country journey spent listening to survivors of gender-based violence. Her writing has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *The New Republic*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* and numerous other publications.**

*A biweekly series curated by the Chicago Reader and sponsored by the Poetry Foundation. Poem curated by Nikki Patin, who holds an MFA in creative non-fiction from the University of Southern Maine, is a recipient of a 3Arts Make A Wave award in music, and was recently named one of "30 Writers to Watch" by the Guild Literary Complex. Patin is the community engagement director for the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation and the founder and executive producer of Surviving the Mic, a monthly live podcast and writing workshop series based on the south side of Chicago, where she lives with her six-year-old son, Tobias.*



## LOW-TECH SPECTACLE

# Shadows and light

Manual Cinema celebrates ten years of lighting the lamp of art.

By **IRENE HSIAO**

“The cradle rocks above an abyss, and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness,” writes Vladimir Nabokov in *Speak, Memory*, where he describes the past as a series of illuminated pictures, through which one’s character “becomes visible when the lamp of art is made to shine through life’s foolscap.” Potent backlit images magnified to eyelash-fine detail before being whisked away, with a sly billow of the curtain that brings the mechanism of the art abruptly into view also describes the magic of Manual Cinema, the homegrown puppet theater company celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. Using overhead projectors and cut paper visibly moved by hands, wires, and transparencies, Manual Cinema combines the low-tech nostalgia of silhouettes in the dark with dazzling projections, cerebral design, and live music in quadrasonic surround sound. Mostly wordless,

*we could make another thing! Maybe we should come up with a name!”* They dubbed themselves “Manual Cinema,” and, project by project, they developed the cinematic shadow puppetry they’re now known for worldwide.

“Definitely none of us were experts in this medium,” says Dir. With a diverse array of backgrounds in theater, visual art, and music, the company has developed a method and medium they compare to making films.

“The process for each production takes at least a year under ideal circumstances,” says Kauffman. “We do some written treatment but quickly move to more cinematic tools to develop an idea: storyboards, animatics, demo videos. Our shows don’t have a lot of dialogue or text, so we rely on visual language, sonic language, and cinematic language of editing, compressing, and expanding time.”

“It is an iterative process and very designed at every level,” says Dir. “Each time we bring in another layer of artists, it changes—the show might begin with a storyboard, but then the puppets are built and start to change the story. The composers start to change the story, and the puppeteers. The show is remade over and over again. In that way it’s a lot like film, written as a screenplay, remade again in production, remade in postproduction. We’re constantly cutting it.”

“It is a living organism,” adds Kauffman. “There’s enough unknowns and curveballs that you don’t know what a show is until it’s fully up on its feet on a stage”—he and Miller speak rapidly, their words dovetailing into a single sentence—with “costumes, lighting” (Miller), “performers” (Kauffman), “the timing of what they’re doing—until it opens” (Miller). “We made four or five versions of *Lula* as we were learning how much more story we could tell” (Miller).

This collaborative, experimental approach has defined how the company developed its particular art over the years. “A huge part of the ethos of Manual Cinema is showing the mechanism and the technique of how we’re making the show and sharing the stage with the final image, but we didn’t start that way,” says Miller. After two years of working more traditionally behind



a screen, a 2012 collaboration with video artist Rasean Davonte Johnson while in residence at the Logan Center for the Arts resulted in an installation version of *Lula Del Ray*, with the company performing live inside the black box theater as video of the work was projected onto a screen in the lobby, where speakers created a surround sound environment, with audiences encouraged to wander between the two.

An engagement at Theater on the Lake the next year further solidified their methodology: “It’s a big theater, and we had a tiny footprint!” says Miller. “That’s when we hung a big video projection screen and had us underneath it.” Each production thereafter has added more variables and possibilities to the product: projections, live actors, experimentation with depth of field, and so on.

Their touring schedule brought to a halt by COVID-19, like others, Manual Cinema began streaming archival video in April—to enthusiastic response. “You see one show, but we might not come back to your theater for two years—or ever,” notes Miller. As it became clear that their tenth anniversary performance series at the Chopin Theatre would be canceled, they added the four intended productions to the queue to be streamed starting July 27, billed as a “retrospectacular.” Yet still hungry for “the live element,” the company has continued to work remotely to create a live performance streaming August 22 as a “Tele-FUN-draiser,” with 10 percent of the proceeds going to the artists who were in the archival videos and previously booked for the run.

They anticipate cautiously working in person again this fall to develop an adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, a project long on their to-do list. “There’s so much to mine right now: social distancing, isolation, holidays with family members, what’s safe, what’s not. Can you visit your grandparents?” says Miller. “We’re in the process of coming up with protocols: what PPE

is required, how does everyone have a station so no one is touching the same stuff. We experimented with that on a video shoot in May for [the forthcoming feature film] *Candyman*, but it’s a weird position to be in when you have no federal oversight and you have to figure out what’s safe for you and your employees.”

Reflecting on the last ten years, Kauffman says, “Our tenth anniversary roughly coincides with the decades of our lives. We started Manual Cinema in our early 20s; now we’re in our 30s. So it feels like the end of a chapter, and the pandemic is making us think about the future in a new way and forcing us to reimagine what we do and who we are.”

Miller remembers Manual Cinema’s first international performance in 2014, the first time Americans were invited to perform in the Tehran Mobarak International Puppet Festival. “We went to Iran during the U.S. nuclear conversation. We did two shows to a packed audience, and it was the first time they flew the American flag in Tehran since the revolution. They didn’t have gaffer’s tape in the theater because they had been under the trade embargoes. It was so emotional to be invited, and I feel fortunate to be able to share our work.”

“I don’t think any of us expected to be in this line of work or saw ourselves making this kind of art when we started out,” says Dir. “All of us fell into it, and we’re grateful that we found it and each other—or the work found us. For the first couple years it was just experimentation of the medium, trying to figure out what this is, Manual Cinema. What makes it really creatively alive is that we’re still trying to answer that question, and the work is continuing to give us new and exciting answers to that question. The answers keep changing, so that’s what makes it a worthwhile project to continue.” 

 @IreneCHsiao

**Manual Cinema’s 10th Anniversary Retrospectacular**  
7/27-8/23: *Lula Del Ray*, 7/27-8/3; *The End of TV*, 8/3-8/10; *No Blue Memories: The Life of Gwendolyn Brooks*, 8/10-8/17; *Frankenstein*, 8/17-8/23; [manualcinema.com](http://manualcinema.com), **FREE**

sometimes embodied, their productions tell stories in images and episodes that flicker by as the artists rendering them work ceaselessly in the drama of plain sight.

Artistic directors Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, Julia Miller, and Kyle Vegter first teamed up for the Rough House Experimental Puppetry Festival in 2010. *The Ballad of Lula Del Ray*, their 20-minute piece on a single overhead projector about a desert-dwelling teen’s quest for country music, proved so popular that they found themselves performing all over town. “We did *Lula* at the Whistler, at Cole’s, at a bunch of bars in Logan Square, at friends’ events,” recalls Miller, who first became intrigued with shadow puppetry—and acquainted with Fornace—while working with Redmoon Theater the year before. “We were like, *Oh! People are into this! Maybe*





Native Son MICHAEL BROSILOW

## BOOKS

## Read any good theater lately?

The stages are dark, but Chicago theater is alive on the page.

BY KERRY REID

So you can't go to the theater because (gestures weakly toward everything). Sure, there are streaming productions galore right now—even if they lack the communal experience of live performance. But there is also a special thrill to curling up with a great script and becoming a director in your own mind, imagining how this world on the page looks and feels in three dimensions.

Chicago has been blessed with many great dramatists, and in recent years there has been an explosion of new theatrical voices. It's impossible to provide a comprehensive list of indispensable plays from the last decade or so. And unfortunately, some of the most memorable shows have yet to be published in a widely accessible format. (Get on that, publishers!)

But here are a few titles to get you going—including a couple on history and practices in Chicago theater.

#### The e-word

For good or ill, our local theater scene has historically been defined by the notion of ensemble. What that means is open to interpretation (as a friend who is a biologist and theatermaker once observed on hearing encomia about the theater community, “biologically, community means organisms competing for resources”). But two recent books examine the ensemble concept through the lens of history and artistic practice.

Mark Larson's *Ensemble: An Oral History of Chicago Theater* (2019, Agate Midway Books) is an exhilarating, exhaustive (700 pages and

300 interview subjects) overview of the organisms that made Chicago theater world-class, from the 1950s on, focusing on artists and companies both legendary and overlooked.

For an in-depth look at how the theatrical sausage gets made, *Ensemble-Made Chicago: A Guide to Devised Theater* (2018, Northwestern University Press) by Chloe Johnston and Coya Paz Brownrigg is indispensable. The authors are theater academics, but also have firsthand experience in creating new work in ensemble—Paz Brownrigg was a founder of Teatro Luna and is currently artistic director of Free Street, while Johnston worked with the Neo-Futurists. This book combines interviews with members of companies such as Albany Park Theater Project, Honey Pot Performance, and Looking-glass, while also providing practical hands-on exercises for creating work in ensemble.

#### The magnificent seven

Chicago playwright Ike Holter's “Rightlynd” cycle of seven loosely connected plays, which began with 2014's *Exit Strategy* at Jackalope and concluded with 2019's *Lottery Day* at the Goodman, offers a kaleidoscopic and often

scathing portrait of a city dealing with everything from the crisis in public education to police violence to gentrification (which is usually the knot tying all the other issues together). But it's not docudrama: Holter sprinkles in superheroes, roman à clef nods to Chicago's storefront theater (most notably in 2019's *Red Rex* with Steep Theatre), and plenty of uproarious righteous humor. *Exit Strategy* was supposed to be revived this upcoming winter with Victory Gardens, but the COVID shutdown ended that plan. However, that title and several others in the cycle (as well as his non-Rightlynd plays) have been published and can be ordered through your favorite indie bookseller.

#### Border drama

Isaac Gomez made his Steppenwolf debut in 2018 with *La Ruta*, a searing drama about the women who work in the maquiladoras (and have been murdered or disappeared in huge numbers over the past few decades) in Ciudad Juarez, across the border from Gomez's hometown of El Paso. That play was based on interviews Gomez conducted with the women of Juarez. But he also created a one-woman show, *The Way She Spoke*, also drawn from interviews, that premiered in 2019 with New York's Audible Theater, starring Kate del Castillo. It's available as a download with Audible.

#### Native daughter

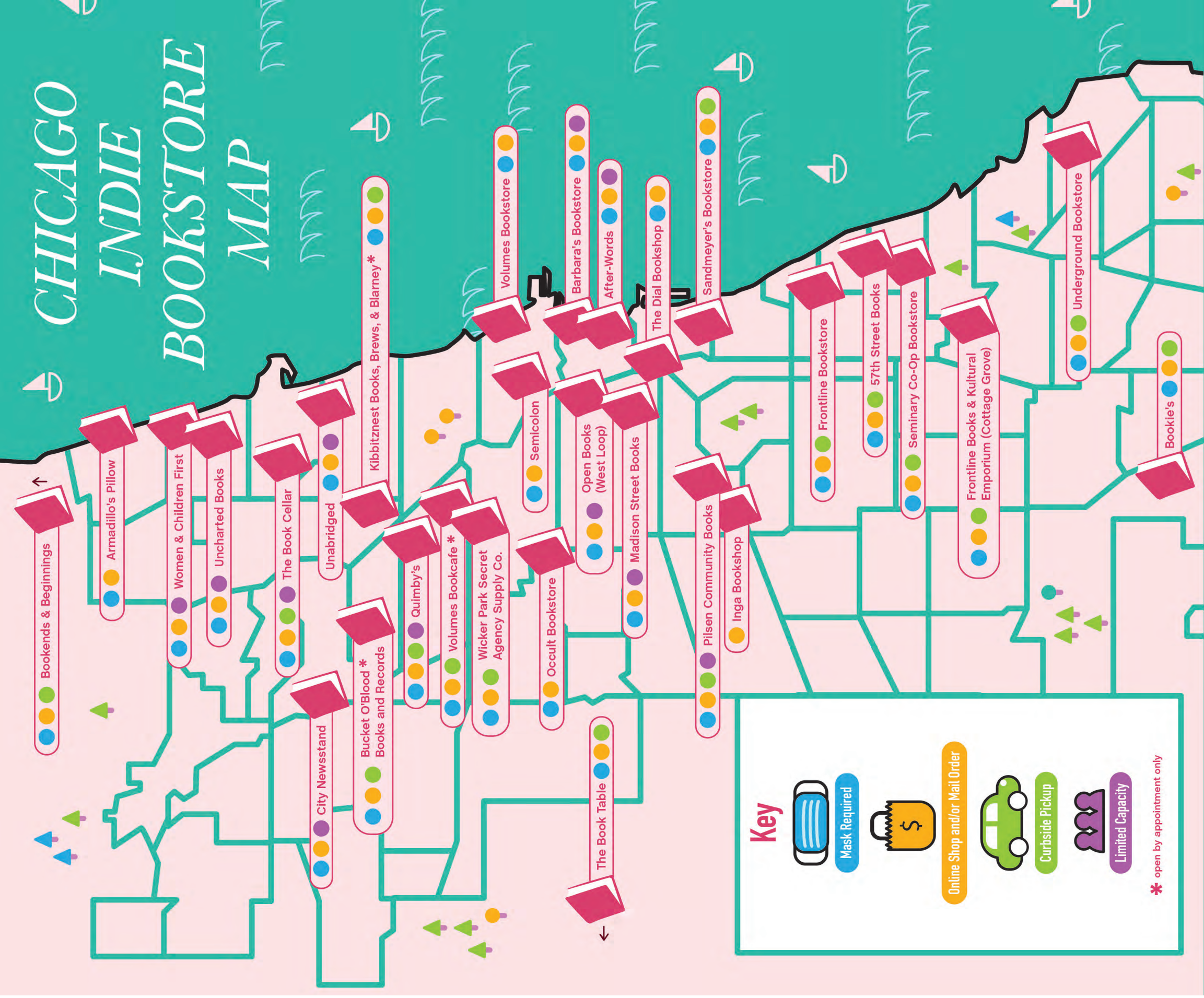
Nambi E. Kelley, who is now a writer for Showtime's *The Chi*, was born in New York City but grew up in Chicago, where she started her career as an actor and playwright. Her 2016 adaptation of Richard Wright's classic Chicago novel *Native Son* (a coproduction of Court Theatre and American Blues Theater) brought the story of Bigger Thomas to life in a swift and searing 90 minutes. It's available in script form through Samuel French. Kelley has since adapted Toni Morrison's *Jazz* for the stage in addition to her television writing.

#### Seeing The Light

Like Kelley, Loy Webb is now a television writer (for AMC's *NOS4A2*). Her 2018 playwriting debut, *The Light* with New Colony, was a compelling and taut two-hander about a Black couple dealing with the aftermath of a sexual assault and other relationship baggage. It's available through Samuel French. She followed that up with 2019's *His Shadow* at 16th Street Theater, about a college football player personally affected by police violence. We hope that she, like so many other fine Chicago dramatists of the times, will be back in production here as soon as COVID recedes into history.

@kerryreid





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## NOW PLAYING

### RR *The Beach House*

Jeffrey A. Brown's *The Beach House* is a daring debut that proves you don't need a big budget to make a captivating cosmic horror film. In an effort to save their tenuous relationship, Randall (Noah Le Gros) takes his girlfriend Emily (Liana Liberato) to his family's isolated beach house—only to find that the house has been occupied by an older couple who knew Randall's estranged father. Tensions rise as they navigate their interpersonal relationships, but they quickly discover there is something much more sinister bubbling under the surface—and time is running out before it spreads. The tension of *The Beach House* is amplified by a jarring score from Roly Porter and a truly electric editing style that pulls you into the narrative. Liberato is a commanding heroine, combating both the horrors of contagion and her gaslighting, emotionally absent boyfriend. Much of the film's runtime may be slow building, but once it hits its crescendo it's hard to not let it completely wash over you. **—CODY CORRALL 88 min. Now streaming on Shudder**

### *Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets*

To be a regular somewhere, to go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came—might that be the real American dream? Shot in late 2016 on what appears to be the last day of business at a small but beloved Las Vegas dive bar called the Roaring 20s, this quasi-documentary by filmmaking brothers Bill and Turner Ross (*Tchoupitoulas*, *Western*) hones in on the dynamics among the wearied staff and steadfast barflies as they say goodbye to their home away from home. There are scenes that can be found at any well-trod watering hole: drunken philosophers doling out wisdom (intelligible and not), tentative lovers flirting,

and short-lived enemies fighting. This might sound like a tragicomic portrait of life on the skids, a nonfiction variation on Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, but here's the kicker: the Roaring 20s is actually on the outskirts of New Orleans (where the filmmakers are from), and it's doing just fine; the brothers staged the action and recruited the "cast" from among regulars at various local bars. It's unclear, however, what they're attempting to say or what questions their approach raises about the documentary form—this is engaging but nevertheless fails to accomplish anything of note. **—KATHLEEN SACHS 98 min. Music Box Theatre Virtual Cinema**

### *Fatal Affair*

If you're the kind of person who enjoys yelling at the movie screen when characters make poor choices, you may like *Fatal Affair*. To be clear, this is not a good movie. However, its earnest cheesiness may provide an afternoon of quarantine distraction, and perhaps for 2020 that's enough. Black Hollywood royalty Nia Long and Omar Epps play Ellie and David, two old friends who indulge in a moment of passion that threatens to undo Ellie's troubled marriage to Michael, played by Stephen Bishop. Infinitely watchable and attractive, Long and Epps and Bishop should all smolder on the screen more than they do, but Peter Sullivan's rather basic script never reveals their acting chops and sticks to the basic gimmicks of the genre. The infinite appeal of romance-turned-stalker films like the iconic *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* and *Fatal Attraction* lies in relishing the safe escalation of the breach of consent through increasingly alarming, imaginative—and often ridiculously implausible—methods. While the story for *Fatal Affair* never quite reaches "bunny stew" levels of psychopathy, Ellie's inaction as the victim is terrifying and maddening (OMG JUST CALL THE POLICE), and a nuanced exploration of that cocktail of shame, fear, and subsequent paralysis

### *The Beach House*

could have rendered a richer film. **—SHERI FLANDERS 89 min. Now streaming on Netflix**

### RR *John Lewis: Good Trouble*

Real life American hero Congressman John Lewis is both honored and humanized by the documentary *John Lewis: Good Trouble*. The film draws a direct line between the past and present, cutting between Lewis's accomplishments and newly-minted politicians such as Stacey Abrams and members of "The Squad," highlighting the humbling task of stepping into the giant shoes of a legend. Covering well-worn territory such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, viewers are treated to stunning, rarely seen Civil Rights footage that was even new to Lewis himself. One particularly gripping scene shows a terrifyingly realistic nonviolence training session role-play in preparation for sit-ins at segregated diners—that would turn violent. Starting his life as a young man picking cotton, then ascending to the ranks of Congress, the film reveals a man who is a ruthless and cunning campaign opponent, a progressive and effective legislator, a hilarious, kindhearted fan of chickens and dancing, and a joyfully stoic man who possesses steely bravery in the face of white supremacists. Lewis says, "I lost my sense of fear. When you lose your sense of fear, you are free." **—SHERI FLANDERS 96 min. Gene Siskel Film Center From Your Sofa, Music Box Theatre Virtual Cinema**

### *The Kissing Booth 2*

*The Kissing Booth 2* retains the ludicrous energy of its predecessor. To recap, the first film follows late-bloomer Elle (Joey King) and her best friend Lee (Joel Courtney) during their junior year. Things are going okay until Noah (Jacob Elordi), Lee's older bad-boy brother and Elle's secret crush, threatens to ruin everything. Predictably, Elle and Noah get together, and Elle and Lee remain besties, all aided by the titular kissing booth. The sequel employs another calculable script filled with fantastical beats. While Elle and Lee stay in California to finish high school, Noah leaves to attend Harvard, leaving Elle scrambling to apply to east coast colleges and earn the tuition money to attend. This conundrum spurs the film's highlight, a *Dance Dance Revolution* competition with a huge cash prize, which sees Elle coupled with a handsome new student. Viewers will guess the outcome well before the more than two-hour movie wraps, but it's still amusing to watch King and Elordi navigate these juvenile diary entries of a franchise (we smell a trilogy) as their careers positively blossom elsewhere. **—BECCA JAMES 131 min. Now streaming on Netflix**

### RR *Relic*

First-time writer-director Natalie Erika James's *Relic* is as tender as it is terrifying. Following moth-

er-daughter duo Kay (Emily Mortimer) and Sam (Bella Heathcote) after they discover their matriarch is missing, *Relic* is a family drama first and a horror movie second, which benefits both the film and the viewer. Edna (Robyn Nevin) does return, but true to the genre, something is off. Kay is instantly wary of her mother's new peculiarities, whereas Sam is happy to have her grandmother back and hopeful she'll be able to care for her. It doesn't take long for Edna's dementia-like symptoms to become more sinister, though. Simultaneously, the house starts to disorient all three generations of women. Literal twists and turns leave Kay and Sam trapped, until they aren't anymore. More hauntingly beautiful than plain haunting, and with scares and sentiment going hand in hand, *Relic* delivers a somewhat surprising ending for an ostensible haunted house movie. **—BECCA JAMES 89 min. Music Box Theatre**

### *The Rental*

Vacation horror is here to stay. From *The Lodge* to *Becky* to *You Should Have Left* to *The Beach House*, people are looking to escape only to discover that no matter how far you roam, no home is safe. Whether temporarily relocating to mend a broken family or to spend time with loved ones, there's peril around every corner. In *The Rental*, two couples (Alison Brie and Dan Stevens and Sheila Vand and Jeremy Allen White) travel to the coast for a celebratory weekend that quickly turns into an uneasy outing when damning secrets start to come to light. The rising tension of Dave Franco's directorial debut (produced by Joe Swanberg) plays well but lasts a bit too long, and once the relationship drama finally takes a hard turn into horror, the results are lacking. A slasher film meant to scare the average millennial, the final reveal will resonate with the Airbnb crowd for only a long weekend if at all. **—BECCA JAMES 89 min. Music Box Theatre**

### *Yes, God, Yes*

Given the sheer number of coming-of-age films in the world, it's surprising how rare it is still to see a woman unapologetically masturbate on screen. Yes, God, Yes is Karen Maine's plucky attempt to add some much-needed representation. Adapted from the 2017 short film of the same name, the film follows a Catholic teen (Natalia Dyer) who discovers the power of self-love while trying to unlearn the beliefs that tell her that masturbation is inherently sinful. Yes, God, Yes uniquely captures sexual discovery in the age of the early Internet—from asking A/S/L? in AOL chat rooms to utilizing a trusty vibrating Nokia to get the job done. But Alice's sexual awakening is less of a come-to-Jesus moment than it is muted and fully uninterested in itself. Even with a breezy 78-minute runtime, Yes, God, Yes rarely justifies the need for its extended form and lacks any real commitment to a complicated issue begging to be explored fully. **—CODY CORRALL 78 min. In wide release on VOD RR**





# READER RECIPES

## Chicago Cooks *and drinks!* at Home

RECIPES FROM THE CITY'S BEST CHEFS AND BARTENDERS

The *Chicago Reader*, like so many food and beverage professionals, is facing a devastating blow to our finances during this COVID-19 crisis. In response, we teamed up with the city's best chefs and bartenders to give you their stay-at-home staples. Fifteen percent of the profits will go to the Comp Tab Relief Fund, a project created to provide financial assistance to any and all service workers who need it.

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**Ina Pinkney**  
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# Remembering Triad Radio, where the usual was unusual

Chicago's pioneering experiment in commercial free-form radio left the airwaves in 1977, but longtime program director Saul Smaizys is moving its archives online.

By **ROBERT MAROVICH**

Most Americans became aware of Kraftwerk when “Autobahn,” the pioneering German electronic band’s first U.S. single, hit Top 40 playlists in 1975. But not fans of Chicago’s Triad Radio: they’d known about Kraftwerk for years, because the nightly radio show had been programming tracks from the group’s first three albums since 1971. Triad on-air host and program director Saul Smaizys had even played “Autobahn” in 1974—not the 3:27 single edit but the nearly 23-minute album version, from a test pressing of the *Autobahn* LP delivered by a record-company representative. “We put that on,” Smaizys says, “and the phones went crazy.”

It was neither the first nor the last time that Triad listeners were privy to previews of pop music’s future. Every weeknight from 1969 till 1977, first on WEAW and then on WXFM, Triad introduced Chicagoans to the music of soon-to-be stars: David Bowie, Genesis, the Scorpions, Donna Summer, and many others who would define popular music in the 1970s and 1980s. At the time, the status quo in radio was to broadcast short singles selected by program directors, not disk jockeys, but Triad defied that model. By airing pop and rock songs not marketed as singles, it helped construct a new status quo on the FM dial: the progressive album-oriented rock format.

The progressive rock format referred to stations with eclectic programming inside the rock genre, and Triad certainly had that—but it also went further, becoming a Chicago pioneer of commercial free-form radio, which expanded its eclecticism to allow for any-

Photos by Saul Smaizys of Triad Radio, taken during the show’s 1970s run. From top left: Herbie Hancock, Jenny Hahn of Babe Ruth (at the Triad House), Michael Schenker with UFO, the Sensational Alex Harvey Band, and Moondog. SAUL SMAIZYS / COLLAGE BY RACHEL HAWLEY



thing in any genre. The show's producers, not station management, selected the music, and Triad supplemented its diet of rock with jazz, fusion, blues, reggae, folk, comedy, interviews, poetry, electronica, classical, experimental music, Eastern music, and more. Just about any type of recording that sounded good (or at least interesting), Triad would play.

Triad debuted just two years after the nation's first acknowledged commercial free-form format, masterminded by former Top 40 jock Tom Donahue and broadcast in the evenings over San Francisco's KPMX. In Chicago, Triad preceded WGLD's progressive-rock show *Psyche*, launched in 1970, and WXRT's reincarnation as a progressive rock station in 1972 (John Platt, who helped establish the format on WXRT, had been part of WGLD). Triad also enlarged its cultural footprint by printing free monthly radio guides that eventually grew to magazine size, often topping 100 pages and branching out into events coverage, editorials, and more.

Given the Internet's thorough transformation of music discovery, it takes a little mental labor to imagine being a Chicago music buff, scanning the AM and FM bands in the early 70s in hopes of finding something interesting. But when those folks landed on Triad, it was as though they'd become Dorothy stepping out of black-and-white Kansas and into Technicolor Oz.

In 2017, Saul Smaizys began digitizing the show's archives, which he maintains himself. On the GoFundMe page he created that year to fund the work, he explains at least part of his motive: "I believe the contents of the archive will be of great benefit to music fans and researchers in that period of musical history."

The material that Smaizys still has includes lots of interviews, some with notables such as Bowie, Kraftwerk, Pink Floyd, and Heart and others with lesser-known artists, among them genre-jumping jazz flutist Hubert Laws, Irish folk musician Paul Roche, and Steve Miller Band keyboardist Ben Sidran. He has correspondence with artists, including German bands Can and Kraan; artist promotional photos and bios; and copies of many of the monthly Triad radio guides.

The archive also contains many "air checks," which allow a present-day audience to hear exactly what Triad broadcast 45 or even 50 years ago. They're snippets of live radio, often an entire segment or show, and Smaizys's tapes include not just music but also DJ patter, station IDs, interstitials, and sometimes commercials.

Smaizys wants this material to be available to the public for free, just as Triad's broadcasts and radio guides were always free—his approach is an extension of Triad's philosophy

of sharing the best and most distinctive voices with everyone willing to listen. Triad was, as one of its early radio guides declared, where the usual was unusual.

Triad Radio was the brainchild of three young Lithuanian Americans who wanted to create an outlet for the vibrant music pouring out of the 1960s counterculture—they felt it wasn't getting the airplay it should on commercial radio. Entrepreneur Donatas Bacinskas (aka Dan Bacin, who later founded Bacino's Pizza), artist Alvydas Biciunas (whose family owned Bridgeport's famed Lithuanian restaurant Healthy Food), and artist and writer Aldona (who prefers to go by her first name alone) met at a Chicago conference for Lithuanian young adults. Around Christmastime in 1968, Bacin and Biciunas visited Aldona in her native Boston, inviting her to come back to Chicago and help them build their forum for new music. Bacin calls it an idea borne out of the "boundless certainty of youth"—at the time, all three of them were between 19 and 21.

Aldona and Bacin had begun a romantic relationship, so though Aldona had just enrolled at Boston University, she pulled up roots and moved to Chicago. During the snowy trek to the midwest, she listened over and over to Iron Butterfly's "In-a-Gadda-da-Vida" in the car.

Bacin figured out how to buy airtime on local radio—Aldona calls him the "consummate salesman." Triad launched in March 1969 on Evanston's WEAW-FM, airing weekdays from midnight till 5 AM. The show's first on-air host was a man named Dennis Gray, and because it broadcast just 25 hours per week, it only needed one.

To cover initial costs—mostly airtime, since in the early days nobody working for Triad was paid—Bacin cobbled together money borrowed from family. In summer 1969, he and Aldona generated additional income by selling waterbeds at the Illinois State Fair. "It was a heck of a lot of work and really hot!" Bacin recalls. Thankfully, advertising revenue eventually paid for the daily airtime.

The show's name, Triad, is a musical term for a chord that stacks three notes in intervals of thirds, but it also referred to the show's founding trio. Bacin offered a third meaning in 1971, when he told a *Billboard* reporter that philosophically, Triad embodied "the imperishable part of man as mind, spirit, and soul; the common cord [*sic*]." As its opening theme, the program adopted Jefferson Airplane's "Triad," a mellow, introspective groove from the 1968 album *Crown of Creation*. Bacin says that the Eye of Providence, specifically as it appears atop a pyramid on the back of the dollar bill, was a visual depiction of Triad. It

became the show's iconic symbol, ultimately adorning covers of radio guides as well as T-shirts and stickers.

Aldona recalls that Triad programmed a little bit of everything right from the start. "I liked folk, rock, and jazz, so we had a lot of that," she says. "Then we tapped into the idea that record companies would send us records." She laughs. "That may be why we started the show in the first place—free records!"

The show's format expanded further in early 1970, when Smaizys came on board. Also of Lithuanian heritage, Smaizys (pronounced *smay-ZHEEs*) was born in Würzburg, Germany, in 1947, the same year as Kraftwerk cofounder Florian Schneider (who passed away in April). Smaizys's family emigrated to the U.S. in 1949, living in Cleveland for a spell before settling among fellow Lithuanians in Bridgeport. Smaizys had been a radio enthusiast since childhood: preparing for school meant tuning in to WAAF to listen to pioneering Chicago jazz DJ Holmes "Daddy-O" Daylie. "I always liked jazz and the blues," Smaizys says. "I used to listen to Big Bill Hill. He had live remotes from clubs. I remember hearing Howlin' Wolf live on the air."

As much as Smaizys cares about music, his true love was (and still is) photography. When Bacin called him about Triad in early 1970, he was working a film-processing job at Astra Photo, which had become Chicago's first black-and-white custom lab when it opened in 1955.

Bacin and Smaizys had met years earlier at a Lithuanian youth center on the south side, and they'd bonded over music, spending weekends listening to records at Smaizys's apartment near Clark and Surf. "We'd listen to the Rolling Stones, Frank Zappa," Smaizys says. "I had some electronic-music records. I had knowledge of a lot of weird sounds."

Those "weird sounds" were what prompted Bacin's call. He wanted Smaizys to pick out background music to play behind Triad's on-air host while he announced the songs. Smaizys hadn't considered radio as a profession, but he liked what he heard and joined the team. In spring 1970, Triad was barely a year old but had already added a second shift on WXFM 105.9 FM (aka WXFM 106). For a short period, Triad aired on two stations: WEAW on weekdays from midnight to 5 AM, and WXFM on weeknights from 8 PM to midnight.

When brokering two shows got too expensive for the growing but still financially vulnerable enterprise, the Triad team dropped the WEAW slot. The show's relationship with WXFM—its home for the rest of its run—was generally sound, but there were occasional dust-ups with station management. "They kind of got down on us for some of the things

we played," Smaizys remembers. "We got in trouble one time by playing a song by a Black Panther member. He let out the F-word and we kind of missed it." Live radio had its hazards without a seven-second delay.

When Smaizys joined Triad, Dennis Gray was still the on-air host. "For a while, he would do the announcing and I would cue the records," Smaizys says. "Then I did two days of announcing and he did three days. We would flip it the following week. He'd announce for two days and I'd do three." Eventually Gray moved on to play in local space-rock band Stratosled (which included Jack "Hawkeye" Daniels from the Shadows of Knight), and Smaizys took over the announcer's seat altogether.

Just as Triad's programming was the antithesis of pop radio, Smaizys's Zen-like calm and baritone voice were the antithesis of the rapid-fire patter of the era's "personality" disc jockeys. His measured delivery communicated confidence, cool, and an almost intimidating musical authority—but he still sounded like the kind of guy you'd want to hang out with on weekends, checking out new sounds on the turntable.

At first, Triad had little local competition in the free-form sphere. Smaizys recalls an underground progressive-rock show called *Spoke* that debuted on WLS-FM in 1968 with the tagline "The flesh that holds the wheel of life together." It featured music by the likes of Savoy Brown, the Rolling Stones, and Jefferson Airplane, but by 1969 it was gone. In January 1970, WGLD-FM began broadcasting a progressive rock format (including the show *Psyche*), and Bacin admits that it was competition—but "only to a certain extent. You have to have confidence in your own approach." Triad was steadily building an avid listenership, and record companies were starting to pay attention.

While Smaizys handled the airwaves, Bacin took care of business, selling ads and securing free product from record labels as well as interviews with artists. "Dan was really good at getting records for us," Smaizys says. "He'd get jazz, rock, imports. He'd get blues. We had so much to choose from." What Bacin couldn't provide, Smaizys bought from the import bin at the Loop location of Rose Records.

Listeners also sent in records from time to time—one couple, avid fans of the show, contributed the 1971 debut album of pioneering Krautrock band Faust to Triad's growing library. It was during this time, Aldona says, that "Saul became more active in picking the music and drawing from his own tastes." At first Aldona, Bacin, Biciunas had selected Triad's music, but after Smaizys got involved, he



continued from 27

gradually became the sole programmer. His love for Krautrock—an emerging form of German experimental rock that combined psychedelia, electronic music, and repetitive “motorik” rhythms—wasn’t immediately shared by everyone at the show, but its spaced-out, avant-garde sound soon became Triad’s calling card.

That’s not to say Triad’s playlist narrowed at all under Smaizys’s influence. Its bottomlessly eclectic palette included European progressive-rock bands, electronic music, and the Afrofuturistic stylings of Sun Ra alongside jazz-fusion bassist Stanley Clarke, Ken Nordine’s *Word Jazz*, and meditations with Indian spiritual leader Sri Chinmoy. It was unlike anything else on Chicago radio at the time, and it drew scads of listeners, mostly teens and young adults. A listener from Niles named Ron Friedman, who’d go on to work as Triad’s comptroller, remembers the show shaping how he understood music. “Saul would play Emerson Lake & Palmer’s ‘Pictures at an Exhibition,’ and then play the original version,” he says. “Triad pretty much informed my musical taste, from jazz to classical to rock in its different incarnations.”

New York native Rob Gillis, who joined the Triad management team in 1975 and stayed till the end, points out that the show’s anything-goes eclecticism followed an internal logic—it wasn’t the radio equivalent of iPod shuffle. “Triad played music in a way that made sense,” he says. “It had to have a groove. It had to have interesting rhythms or an atmosphere. We were saying, ‘This is an adventure and you’re going on it.’” The Triad team thought of the show as a way to elevate the mind through sound. As Bacin told *Billboard* in the mid-1970s, “The basis of radio today is the intermeshing of education with entertainment. They should be one in [*sic*] the same.”

Each five-hour nightly Triad broadcast was subdivided into regularly featured specialty segments. *Flight 106* was an hour-long survey of contemporary rock, jazz, and blues. *New Sounds and New Releases* introduced the latest cuts from albums by national and international artists in a variety of genres. *Sounds From Across the Big Swamp* focused on Krautrock (Can, Kraan, Amon Düül II, Guru Guru), prog rock (Triumvirat, Gentle Giant, Genesis), and fusion (Passport, the Mahavishnu Orchestra). “Saul and I were in sync about having a wide variety of music,” Bacin says. “Whether it was Jimi Hendrix, John Cage, or Mozart, there was a place for it on Triad.”

In 1970 or possibly early 1971, Smaizys had the idea to publish a monthly radio guide with highlights from upcoming Triad shows.

“At first it was a one-sheet, folded in thirds,” he says. “We’d send it out to listeners who sent us a stamp. From there, we made a booklet, hand drawn by our resident artist.” The guide used a parade of art directors, and one of the first was Triad cofounder Biciunas, who added his own calligraphy to early editions. The one-sheet quickly expanded to digest size, and by the end of 1971 it had already reached 48 pages. “Eventually,” Smaizys says, “we had enough material for a full-size magazine.”

For eight important years in the evolution of popular music, Triad was the night school where intrepid listeners gathered faithfully at the vanguard of sonic innovation.

Bacin acknowledges that the radio guide was inspired by a similar publication that Peabody Award-winning radio executive Ray Nordstrand cultivated in the 1950s at WFMT, where he served as an announcer for the famous *Midnight Special* broadcast (it describes itself as “the world’s weekly aberration of folk music and farce, show tunes and satire, madness and escape”). In 1951 WFMT arguably became the first alternative radio station in the U.S., and *The Midnight Special* has been airing regularly since 1953.

The full-size Triad monthly radio guide debuted in late 1971 or early 1972, and the show distributed it through local retailers who advertised in the magazine, especially record stores and head shops. As the guide grew, it was called *Cosmozodiac* for a couple years, and by the middle of the decade it had topped

100 pages per issue.

Like a free, Chicago-based version of *Rolling Stone* or *Creem*, the guide in its fullest flower featured not just Triad’s daily radio schedule but also a cultural arts calendar, a wide range of reviews (albums, films, concerts, books, and theater), cartoons, editorials, horoscopes, discussions about meditation, an arts-related crossword puzzle, and even recipes (one explained how to make nicotine-free herbal tobacco). Early issues were as free-form in thought and presentation as the evening broadcast. Later issues were more polished and included feature articles on music celebrities such as Paul McCartney—those kinds of stories, Gillis notes, expanded readership.

Recognized journalists such as Abe Peck, previously editor of countercultural Chicago newspaper *The Seed*, wrote for the magazine; so did Mahavishnu Orchestra leader John McLaughlin. The task of producing the guide pushed the Triad team to expand, and at one point it included more than two dozen employees and contributors, among them associate publisher Chris Vassilopoulos, editor Patrick Goldstein, and salesperson Jason Perlman. George Kase, now a director and owner with Chicago Film Works after spending years in advertising, produced some Triad radio spots (mostly station IDs and other promotional interstitials) and helped out with art direction.

At the time, WLS, WVON, and WCFL distributed free weekly surveys, usually one-sheet circulars that listed the most-played records for that week. If those surveys were how you learned about what was happening in popular music, then the Triad radio guide—which advertised itself as “The Midwest’s Largest Free Magazine”—would expand your mind as hugely and irrevocably as the show it supported.

Artist interviews didn’t appear in the Triad guide till it got big enough to accommodate them, but they were an integral part of the show’s on-air presence from the start. David Bowie was among the first. In 1970, the Thin White Duke swept through Chicago on a promotional tour, visiting radio stations to push his third studio album, *The Man Who Sold the World*. Bacin remembers him as intense but soft-spoken. He recalls Bowie’s “dual-colored eyes,” and that he wore a pageboy haircut and tweed pants with two-inch cuffs—not the image most associate with the future Ziggy Stardust.

Smaizys says the Bowie interview almost didn’t happen. “He was at the station, but we couldn’t get the tape recorder working. By the time the station engineer fixed it, Bowie had to leave, so we only got about five minutes,” he says. “Since we didn’t get the full interview, we went to where Bowie was staying, at the

apartment of Robin McBride, the Mercury Records representative. It was on Armitage, across from the Park West. We did more interviewing, and Bowie played a couple of songs on guitar.” The second tape, with the longer interview and impromptu solo concert, has gone missing, but Smaizys hopes it will turn up somewhere in the Triad archives. He’s already digitized the brief clip recorded at WXFM.

Other artists Triad interviewed over the years include Yoko Ono, reggae star Peter Tosh, Ray Manzarek of the Doors, John Kay of Steppenwolf, and Scottish folk rocker Donovan (“He stayed all night and left in the morning,” Bacin says). “One night we had David Bromberg and his band, with Jackson Browne,” Smaizys says. “It was a jam session after one of their concerts. We recorded it.”

On April 20, 1975, the day after Kraftwerk performed at the Aragon, cofounders Florian Schneider and Ralf Hütter sat for a Triad interview. Kraftwerk’s influence on the birth of hip-hop is well-known, and British journalist David Hepworth went even further in his 2016 book *Never a Dull Moment*—he wrote that the band and their Krautrock peers “contained the spoor [*sic*] that would lead to the dance music of the twenty-first century and a revolution quite as big as the one that had brought along rock and roll.”

“Kraftwerk might not even be known in the United States if it were not for Triad,” Friedman says. “They were not being played anyplace else in the country.” Smaizys’s relationship with Schneider was such that when he and his girlfriend toured Europe in 1979, they stayed at Schneider’s penthouse in Düsseldorf.

Triad conducted most of its artist interviews in Smaizys’s production studio, in what became known as the Triad House (Gillis would later call it the Triad Mansion, though that doesn’t appear to have caught on). Rented in 1970, the Rogers Park house served as the command center for Triad’s growing media enterprise as well as living quarters for Bacin and Aldona, Dennis Gray, and Smaizys.

By the mid-1970s, as Gillis remembers it, typesetting and paste-up for the radio guide took place in the attic, where the house’s gabled roof provided plenty of space. The photo and reproduction studios were in the basement, and the business office and dining area were on the first floor. The second floor contained the living quarters, Smaizys’s recording studio, and the Triad record library. “The record collection got to a point where it was all the way down one side of a lengthy hallway and then some,” Bacin says. “That doesn’t count what Saul had in his studio.”

In 1972 Friedman, at that point still just a devoted listener, stopped by the Triad House in response to an ad seeking a distribution man-



ager. Next thing he knew, he was piling radio guides into his AMC Gremlin at Chicago printer Newsweb. “I was hauling Triad radio guides from the printer to the suburbs, dropping them off at the record stores and head shops and salons that were advertising with Triad,” he says.

Working at Triad was an all-in experience, though, so Friedman’s job soon got bigger. “You ended up doing all sorts of things,” he says. “I was involved in the production of the radio guide, the late-night typesetting.” Smaizys operated the reprographic cameras and assembled material for his shows using a four-track recorder—rather than always mixing live on the air, he often made collages of music and other material at home in advance. “Saul did all sorts of pre-taped stuff,” Friedman recalls. “Mixing comedy with music—true audio-media free-form. He had programs and schedules done a month in advance.” Gillis agrees: “I have nothing but admiration for Saul’s skills, in the way he mixed music.”

**T**riad also helped German bands uninvolved with Krautrock break out in the U.S., among them the Scorpions and Lucifer’s Friend. “We seemed to have a bigger following in Illinois than other parts of the U.S.,” says Lucifer’s Friend front man John Lawton (later of Uriah Heep). “Without the help of shows like Triad, bands like Lucifer’s Friend—and many more under the umbrella of Krautrock—would never have gotten half of the recognition they deserved.”

Gillis says that Triad’s reputation with European artists and producers was such that in 1975 Giorgio Moroder, the future Father of Disco, sent Smaizys a seven-inch tape reel containing an erotic dance track that featured a woman’s orgasmic moans. Triad debuted it in Chicago, playing only the instrumental passages—and a few months later, the whole song charted nationally as Donna Summer’s “Love to Love You Baby.”

Triad also gave important support to emerging local artists, of course. In late 1971, producer-manager John Ryan brought Triad demos from a still-unsigned Styx, whose debut LP with Wooden Nickel Records wouldn’t come out till August ’72. Singer-songwriter James “JY” Young, the young band’s lead guitarist, was already a fan of Triad. “On both my stereo and in the car, 106 was where the cool stuff was,” Young recalls. “They mixed in the blues and even Top 40 from time to time. The Siegel-Schwall Band, the Butterfield Blues Band. To me, they were the coolest things. Triad was absolutely what we listened to at night.”

Ryan also brought local country-rock band Heartsfield to Triad’s attention. “They played some of our first demos, like ‘Music Eyes,’ before we ever had a record out,” remembers

lead guitarist Fred Dobbs. The airplay led to a bounty of bookings. “We got a lot of Chicago gigs in the early days. They called us the ‘Lincoln Avenue Sweethearts’! We’d pack the places.” After Ryan introduced Heartsfield to Robin McBride at Mercury Records, the band’s self-titled debut LP, which included the single “Music Eyes,” hit in 1973. And even though a radio edit of the song existed, Triad played the six-and-a-half-minute album version. Dobbs and Heartsfield’s current manager, Dick Reck, both credit Triad for presenting songs at the length artists wrote them.

Local fusion outfit Forest also credits its early success to Triad. “Underground radio was a big thing, and that’s how we found out about Triad,” says Forest guitarist Ray McKenzie. The group, formed at Elk Grove High School, was inspired by what Triad aired—in particular the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Chick Corea & Return to Forever, and Weather Report. “We made a tape at Chicago Recording Company and sent it to Saul,” McKenzie recalls. When Smaizys played the Forest song “Monday Morning Rain,” McKenzie says, it was the band’s big break. “We got a bunch of gigs after that.”

**T**riad received a major boost in 1975 when WXFM, licensed to Elmwood Park, began beaming its signal from atop the Sears Tower, which had been completed a couple years before. That broadened its range to include parts of southern Wisconsin and north-west Indiana. By then the show was already having an impact bigger than its regional footprint would suggest.

“Triad punched above its weight class,” Bacin says. “We started getting west-coast correspondence for the magazine. I was traveling to New York and occasionally to Capitol Records in Hollywood.” Because of Triad’s not insubstantial influence in a major American city, its personnel moved in circles that included the likes of Mick Fleetwood and Frank Zappa. Bacin produced two Triad concerts featuring John McLaughlin, one at the Midwest Buddhist Temple—the first time the building was opened for commercial use.

Unfortunately, this turned out to be a peak for Triad, not a plateau. Gillis believes the beginning of the end arrived in April 1976: that was when WXRT, where Don Bridges had created a similar evenings-only free-form show in August 1972, expanded to a 24-hour progressive rock format. “Triad was no longer the only game in town,” Gillis says. “It couldn’t do what WXRT did, because it didn’t own WXFM. It was still paying for radio time. Advertisers began spreading their money around.”

Triad’s radio operation started bleeding ad revenue before its monthly print guide did, but even there competition had grown. By the

mid-1970s, other free magazines with cultural content, including the *Chicago Reader* and the *Illinois Entertainer*, had entered the fray. Record stores and labels that had once put a significant percentage of their local ad budgets into Triad now had more options.

Given Triad’s proven success in breaking metal bands such as Lucifer’s Friend and the Scorpions, Gillis recommended Triad shift from free-form to a hard-rock format. Despite the team’s valiant efforts, which included bringing in a new on-air host, the financial picture grew grim. “In my head Triad had run its course,” Bacin says. “I had gotten interested in the work of Peter Zarlenga and was looking to do something with his company, which was a combination of philosophical truth and education.”

In 1977, Bacin sold the radio and publishing sides of Triad to Rick and Perry Johnson, owners of the Dog Ear Records retail chain and the Dharma record label, both based in northern Illinois. The Johnsons hired Bacin to spend six months helping them find their way. “I had a list of things for them to definitely not do,” Bacin says, “and they did them all! For example, they turned the monthly magazine into a twice-a-month publication. That didn’t work.”

Later that same year, Don Bridges bought the radio portion of Triad from the Johnsons. But its initial spark of freewheeling counterculture optimism—what Bacin had called the “boundless certainty of youth”—had faded. The final Triad radio broadcast aired in June 1977. Dave Freeman, a former Triad sales associate, picked up the show’s evening time slot at WXFM for jazz programming. The magazine continued for a while longer, becoming more music-centric—Gillis recalls in particular that editor Bill Paige “did a great job covering the early punk/new wave scene.” But untethered from the radio show that had birthed it, by the middle of 1978 the magazine had folded too. Triad was gone.

**G**one but not forgotten. In late 2010, more than 40 years after Triad was founded, Smaizys created the podcast *Remember Triad Radio*. It was a short-lived project—he posted just eight episodes in five months, ranging from 21 to 82 minutes in length—but each of these air checks captures a slice of a Triad broadcast. One episode bears the following description: “Just as it was heard in 1975 with commercials and all. Guru Guru, John Klemmer, Michael White, Jade Warrior, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Burnin’ Red Ivanhoe, Arthur Brown, Sidney Poitier reads Plato, Moody Blues.”

Smaizys started a Triad Radio Facebook page in 2012 or 2013, then launched the Triad Radio Audio Archive Project in 2017. It’s an attempt to revitalize the spirit of the media enterprise for longtime listeners as well as give

new generations a glimpse of decade-defining artists during their embryonic years. “I started digitizing old interviews and air checks, and copies of the radio guide,” Smaizys says, “putting them on a server so people could check them out for free.”

Sometimes that material overlaps with the recordings Smaizys posted as podcasts, but it’s often more complete. Triad frequently aired only portions of artist interviews, and the free, downloadable archive offers a chance to hear them in their entirety. The recordings already available for free download include the Bowie and Kraftwerk interviews as well as chats with Pink Floyd (backstage at the International Amphitheatre in 1973), Gentle Giant (at the Triad House, on a tour promoting the 1974 album *The Power and the Glory*), Yoko Ono, Moondog (on Wabash Avenue outside Rose Records in 1975), John Cale, and Anthony Braxton (whose two-part interview from 1970 includes three solo alto sax improvisations).

Smaizys estimates that he has more than 100 seven-inch tape reels and cassettes still to transfer. He also plans to continue digitizing promotional bios and photos, correspondence with artists, monthly radio guides, and other Triad ephemera.

The GoFundMe that Smaizys set up for the Triad archiving project in 2017 is still active, and he eventually hopes to raise \$5,000 to pay for server space to host the files, cover his time commitment, and acquire the other resources needed to digitize the brittle, four-decade-old tapes and piles of documents. As of this writing, he’s about \$2,200 short.

For eight important years in the evolution of popular music, Triad was the night school where intrepid listeners gathered faithfully at the vanguard of sonic innovation. The thrill was as much in anticipating what Smaizys might play as in actually hearing the music. To borrow the tagline of Ken Russell’s 1975 film of the Who’s *Tommy*, your senses would never be the same. And by the end of the evening, you might have a new favorite band half a world away. “Triad was very important in Chicago, and it influenced a lot of people,” says Ray McKenzie of Forest. “They should be very proud of what they did.”

Triad’s mission—to make the usual unusual, and in the process elevate the minds and spirits of its listeners—also gave a major boost to the careers of emerging superstars. Name an adventurous artist who made it big in the 70s or early 80s, and odds are Triad 106 FM played them. “Triad opened the door for so many of the acts that were to become the mainstays of the next decade,” says James “JY” Young. “They were the front-runners.” 

 @journalofgospel



# 35 Great Moments in Chicago Music History

## Dear Readers:

As part of the Year of Chicago Music, the **Arts & Business Council of Chicago** (A&BC) asked the public to make themselves heard in a musical debate during A&BC's 35th anniversary supporting arts, cultural and creative enterprises. Favorite Chicago music moments were submitted and voted on at **ChiMusic35.com**. DJs, performers, producers, and journalists from across the Chicago music landscape shaped the Challenge as **#ChiMusic35** Ambassadors who highlighted the Chicago music moments that mean the world to them.

Even with the valued input of all those who participated, A&BC and our volunteers are in no position to declare any 35 moments "the greatest," especially in a city with as many great musical moments as Chicago can claim. We consider this list merely a necessarily incomplete introduction to Chicago's incredibly influential music history.

Chicago's Black artists in particular have repeatedly created some of Chicago's most notable musical exports, and laid the foundation for the success of so many artists who followed them. Even through the onslaught of COVID-19 and the social inequities it highlights, and in the context of ongoing protests against systemic racism, Black and Brown voices in Chicago are composing a soundtrack for societal change and lighting the path of sonic innovation. **May we all do what music fans do best: Listen.**



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- #35 - 1926: **Jelly Roll Morton** & his Red Hot Peppers made their first recordings with the Victor Talking Machine Company in Chicago.
  - #34 - 1992: **Common** released his debut album *Can I Borrow a Dollar?*
  - #33 - 1946: **Sun Ra**, a pioneer of Afrofuturism, landed on Chicago's jazz scene.
  - #32 - 2004: Chicago's **Grupo Montéz de Durango** reaches No. 1 on the Billboard Top Latin Albums chart with *En Vivo Desde Chicago*.
  - #31 - 1987: **Phuture** released *Acid Tracks*, cited as the first Acid House record, a sound that went on to define the UK rave movement.
  - #30 - 1955: **Bo Diddley** released his tunes *I'm a Man* and *Bo Diddley* on Chess Records.
  - #29 - 1963: Chicago-born **Herbie Hancock** joined the Miles Davis Quintet.
  - #28 - 1974: As lead vocalist for Rufus, **Chaka Khan** wins a Grammy for *Tell me Something Good*, the first of ten she's won (so far).
  - #27 - 1936: Teenaged Chicagoan **Nat "King" Cole** recorded for Decca Records, as part of Eddie Cole's Solid Swingers.
  - #26 - 1994: **Wilco** formed in Chicago under the leadership of Jeff Tweedy.
  - #25 - 1978: **Wax Trax Records**, later the home label of Chicago's Industrial music scene, was founded in Lincoln Park by life partners Jim Nash and Dannie Flesher.
  - #24 - 2004: **Kanye West** won his first Grammy for Best Rap Album with *College Dropout*.



- #23 - 1923: Blues singer and queer pioneer **Ma Rainey** made her first eight recordings, including *Bad Luck Blues*, for Paramount in Chicago.
- #22 - 1965: **The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM)** was founded in Chicago, with members including jazz luminaries such as Lester Bowie, Anthony Braxton, Jeff Parker, and Henry Threadgill, and spinning out acts like the Art Ensemble of Chicago.
- #21 - 2009: **YOUmedia** Center opened at Harold Washington Library. At this creative and educational space for local teenagers, the late Mike Hawkins, known as Brother Mike, would mentor a generation of Black poets and hip-hop artists, including Noname, Chance the Rapper, Saba, Lucki, and Mick Jenkins.
- #20 - 1963: Chicago's Black-owned **Vee-Jay** label dropped the first U.S. release by an unknown band called The Beatles.
- #19 - 1984: **Jesse Saunders & Vince Lawrence** released *On and On*, cited as the first house music record.
- #18 - 1957: **Buddy Guy** moved to Chicago, where he established himself as a lasting legend of the electric blues and an influence to Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Keith Richards, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jeff Beck, and John Mayer.
- #17 - 1995: **Pitchfork Media** was founded, making Chicago a hub of indie-music criticism and curation. In the mid-2000s, Pitchfork would launch its eponymous, annual music festival in Chicago.
- #16 - 1965: Chicago pianist, composer and arranger **Ramsey Lewis** won his first Grammy Award for "The 'In' Crowd." Lewis's version of the song reached #5 on the Billboard Hot 100 that same year.
- #15 - 2005: Chicago's homegrown Latin music genre, **Duranguense**, held as many as 5 of the top 10 spots on the Billboard Latin charts.
- #14 - 1969: Chicagoans Maurice White, Don Whitehead and Wade Flemons formed a group called the Salty Peppers. After renaming the act **Earth, Wind & Fire**, they would go on to sell more than 90 million records.
- #13 - 1929: **Mahalia Jackson** met **Thomas A. Dorsey** in Chicago. Dorsey would become the father of Gospel music, an enormously popular and influential form, and his composition "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" would become Jackson's signature vocal performance and a favorite of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- #12 - 1964: **The Impressions** recorded *People Get Ready* in Chicago. Inspired by the 1963 March on Washington and written by the legendary Curtis Mayfield, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., named the song the unofficial anthem of the Civil Rights Movement.
- #11 - 1970: **Soul Train** first aired on WCIU-TV in Chicago.
- #10 - 1891: The **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**, one of the "Big 5", was founded.
- #9 - 1922: **Louis Armstrong** arrived in Chicago to join King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band.
- #8 - 1958: **Chuck Berry** recorded *Johnny B. Goode*, laying down what would become one of rock & roll's most iconic opening guitar riffs, at Chess Records studio, 2120 S. Michigan Avenue in Chicago.
- #7 - 1950: **Chess Records** was founded, recording and promoting many of the brilliant and influential Black artists who created rock & roll.
- #6 - 1921: **Sister Rosetta Tharpe** made her solo debut at the age of 6, performing at the 40th Street Church of God in Christ in Chicago. She went on to become a guitarist, songwriter, and recording artist known around the world as the "Godmother of Rock & Roll."
- #5 - 1977: **Frankie Knuckles** began DJing at The Warehouse, 206 S. Jefferson Street in Chicago, the club from which the dance genre known as house music derives its name.
- #4 - 1915: The word "jazz" was printed in the Chicago Tribune. This is believed to be the first time the word was used in American media to describe the musical form.
- #3 - 2017: **Chance the Rapper** upended the music industry by winning 3 Grammys for a streaming-only album, and without the support of a record-label.
- #2 - 1943: **Muddy Waters** moved to Chicago. Waters would go on to influence generations of blues players and rockers in the UK and USA.

# #1

With humility, gratitude, and hope, the Arts & Business Council of Chicago reserves a place on this list of great Chicago-music moments for all of the Chicago artists and musical events not mentioned, especially those who exercised their talent and made their art in the face of systemic racism and insidious discrimination, enabling many artists who followed them to find success. We reserve this place also for the next Chicagoan(s) to influence the music world, likely a musician or band working today in one of the city's 77 neighborhoods. Even as we celebrate its rich and varied musical history, we assert that the city's best musical moments lie ahead of it. And so we fix our eyes on the present and future of Chicago music, with our ears wide open.

*The Arts & Business Council of Chicago thanks the #ChiMusic35 Challenge Ambassadors, each of whom contributed Chicago music moments that have inspired them and their art: Add 2, Martin Atkins, Pugs Atomz, Jeff Baraka, Mark Bazer, Ayana Contreras, DJ Lori Branch, Leor Galil, Pat Grumley, Commissioner Mark Kelly, DJ Lady D, Damon Locks, Rob McKay, Rhymefest, Tim Samuelson, and Wayne William.*



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## CHICAGOANS OF NOTE

# Toronzo Cannon, bluesman and bus driver

"All of us have been put on pause, where we're forced to go sit down and think about our lives, because things can be taken away just like that."

As told to JAMIE LUDWIG

*Toronzo Cannon is an internationally recognized Chicago bluesman. For more than 25 years, he's also been a bus driver for the CTA. In September 2019, he released his second album for Alligator Records, The Preacher, the Politician or the Pimp.*

Facebook has a way of making you feel good and making you feel bad, because you see memories of what you did in the past. Last year today I was at the mayor's office to get a certificate to bring to Aomori, Japan, to kind of make us "blues sister cities." For 17 years, the Japan Blues Festival in Aomori has hired exclu-

sively Chicago blues musicians. And I thought maybe we could get some kind of certificate or something to make a splash out of playing there. So we went to City Hall and met Mayor Lightfoot, and she gave me and Nora Jean Wallace a certificate to take to Japan.

While I'm on the west side, driving the bus through economically deprived neighborhoods that are fresh from the uprising or whatever, stores are not open yet; our ridership is not like it used to be because downtown is still closed. Things are not in the groove yet. There's no schoolkids. So I'm sitting reminiscing about last year. I went to probably four

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or five countries before June of last year, and now I wonder, "Wow, will I ever get a chance to do that again?"

I never took it for granted, but you miss it when you don't have it. It's just a little depressing, but I'm glad to have a job. I'm glad to be, I guess, an essential worker—I didn't know I was an essential worker until they said you have to keep coming to work, you know?

Our routes normally last about three months, but with the whole pandemic and the shutdown, this particular route lasted six months—which is unheard of. If there's a lady who takes the bus every day at 5:45 in the morning, I'm going to look down the street for her. Or she might tell me she's not coming to work tomorrow because she has a vacation

**MILLENNIUM PARK AT HOME: BLUES MUSIC FEATURING IVVY FORD, TORONZO CANNON & THE CHICAGO WAY, AND HOST TOM MARKER**

Night three of the livestreamed festival Blues Music in the Key of Chicago, presented by DCASE and WXRT. Sun 8/2, 6-8 PM, [youtube.com/user/ChicagoCultureEvents/featured](https://youtube.com/user/ChicagoCultureEvents/featured).

day so I don't have to look for her. Those people all of a sudden disappeared, because either they can work from home or their job didn't require them to come in anymore. So for about a month, I was on the bus by myself for most of the day. And all the while I'm reminiscing about things I've done musically that were, in my mind, great achievements.

As musicians, I think a lot of us have lost our momentum. That's been my objective: to not lose my momentum with the music, and find some way to be out there, doing livestreams or Instagram stuff or just putting a song out to let people know I'm still here. All of us have been put on pause, where we're forced to go sit down and think about our lives, because things can be taken away just like that. It forces you to say, "OK, I need a helluva plan B," because this can always happen again. We have to sit and think about what we've done, what we want to do, and what we don't, which could be a good thing. You have to reinvent yourself.

I try not to write songs about the pandemic. I don't want to hear songs about COVID-19. You can use metaphors or find some kind of slick way to write about the heaviness of what's going on in society. But I wouldn't want my next CD to be a whole CD of COVID-19 songs, you know? My last CD came out in September.

It takes about four or five months for a CD to actually gain momentum. And then in the summertime, you tour on it. So just when I was getting ready to do the major gigs to promote the CD, the pandemic came.

My first CD for Alligator Records [*The Chicago Way*] did so well that I ate off of it for three years. The festivals would call, and we'd hit a bunch of different countries and cities. But March 13 was my last gig. It was at Fitzgerald's, and everybody was freaking out because we're thinking they're gonna close the city down. I was thanking everyone for coming out, but I was like, "I don't want to touch anything." They had hand sanitizer at the front door. People didn't want to shake hands. It was only about a week before the shelter-in-place order.

I always do well at that particular venue, and it was still kind of OK. Things were weird—not scary, but weird, where you think, "We have to get used to this." With fans you can usually take a picture, or with your friends you do the brotherly hug, the chest bump, or whatever. Now, if you cough, that's like a gunshot—everybody ducks for cover.

The online stuff is what it is, but it's hard to look into the camera sometime and not get that energy from the crowd. I'm very in the moment when it comes to music. I might see a pair of red shoes in the audience, and I might say something about them and put the attention on the person wearing them, and that might go into my next song. So it's a different kind of stage, because there's nobody to play off of.

I'm trying not to be humdrum about it, but it makes for good songs. There has to be a silver lining somewhere too. It can't just be about being paused and how you felt in every song, because that contributes to some kind of depression or spirit of "Oh my God, woe is me, the world is coming to an end." So I still manage to write some funny songs. Songs that might take your mind off of the situation, or songs about relationships, written in the weird way that I see them.

What are the scenarios when we're in a situation where we're in the house together for 14 days? There are things that you might go through with your lover or something, the funny things—leaving the toilet seat up, or underarm hair, or things like, "I didn't know that you did that before quarantine." So it's a funny take on the 14 days of quarantine without talking about the elephant in the room. As my grandma would say, "Laugh to keep from crying." 🐼

🐼 @ToronzoCannon



PICK OF THE WEEK

## Ben Baker Billington builds worlds out of serene synths on Quicksails' *Blue Rise*



The album art for *Blue Rise* is by Sam Khan.

### QUICKSAILS, *BLUE RISE*

Hausu Mountain

[hausumountain.bandcamp.com/album/blue-rise](https://hausumountain.bandcamp.com/album/blue-rise)

**MANY PROLIFIC MUSICIANS** call Chicago home, but multi-instrumentalist Ben Baker Billington is a veritable Energizer Bunny. He's been contributing otherworldly experimental sounds to the scene since his mid-aughts stint in noise project Druids of Huge, and his musical resumé is too long to reproduce in full here. Any outre artist looking for an open-minded collaborator with a refined ear and exacting technique would be well advised to call on Billington, and many have: he's played drums for free-jazz misfits Tiger Hatchery, industrial-gospel legends Ono, and twisted psych-improv outfit ADT, as well as in the backing bands of Ryley Walker and Circuit des Yeux. Billington has also helped shape the city's experimental scene as a concert programmer: he spearheads the Hideout's monthly Resonance series, and during the COVID-19 pandemic he's been helping organize Experimental Sound Studio's celebrated livestream series, the Quarantine Concerts. Earlier this month, he became the assistant director of the Elastic Arts Foundation, the Logan Square community arts nonprofit that runs the eponymous performance space. But not to be forgotten amid all this activity is Billington's long-running solo project, Quicksails. On *Blue Rise*, the latest Quicksails album for eclectic local label Hausu Mountain, he employs modular and digital synthesizers to create subtle, wide-screen tones. He teases the featherweight atmospheres of "Florian's Brush" with drum brushstrokes, telegraphing an imminent shift in mood as sudden as a summer storm—it never arrives, though, and instead he builds toward a cinematic, heavenly melody. Billington understands how to harness the power of understatement, and on *Blue Rise* the tiniest details open doors to immersive worlds.

—LEOR GALIL



Lianne La Havas © COURTESY THE ARTIST

### LIANNE LA HAVAS, *LIANNE LA HAVAS*

Warner/Nonesuch

[liannelahavas.com](https://liannelahavas.com)

Born in London to a Jamaican mother and a Greek father, singer and guitarist Lianne La Havas takes inspiration from both branches of her family tree and beyond, finessing diverse influences into charming, sophisticated, and often heady alt-pop. She made her full-length debut with 2012's acoustic guitar-driven *Is Your Love Big Enough?* and then slipped into something more electric on her 2015 follow-up, *Green & Gold*. Her new self-titled album is the first she's produced on her own with her band, and its songs of love, loss, and personal growth continue her eclectic pop streak—it's accessible yet hard to pin down. On a synth-soaked cover of Radiohead's "Weird Fishes," watery keys break into an a cappella bridge, and the music builds into blissful alt-rock topped with her hearty vocals. "Please Don't Make Me Cry" channels 90s R&B with its slick, cinematic sound, moving between minimalist drums and sepia-toned acoustic guitar and waves of lushly layered vocal harmonies. On the breakup tale "Seven Times," La Havas pairs danceable grooves with delicate, folky guitar and deceptively light-sounding lyrics about nonstop crying and praying. By the record's final track, "Sour Flour," she's overcome her heartbreak—its airy, complex instrumental rhythms and hand claps and her own little laugh signal that she's moving into a new chapter of her life. —JAMIE LUDWIG

### SCOTT MCGAUGHEY, *YOU DON'T NEED A KEY TO LEAVE*

Shmee

[scottmcgaughey.bandcamp.com/releases](https://scottmcgaughey.bandcamp.com/releases)

If you've ever seen Chicago ensemble Chandeliers, you've seen Scott McGaughey hunched behind a bunch of black boxes and patch cords. Chandeliers have long taken an ecumenical approach to electronic music, weaving together clattering drum programs, squelchy funk punctuations, and long, proggy melodies; the closest they get to a rule is that hardware, not software, deter-

mines the sounds. Synthesizers are also the dominant sound source on McGaughey's first solo LP, but he's swapped Chandeliers' frequently lengthy jams for carefully layered constructions that sneak hints of complicated emotions into their catchy tunes. Jaunty piano stabs challenge the bubbly wistfulness of "Glass Bottom Boat," and the slowed-down voices and sandwich-thick low notes of "DVD Menu" sink through ascending swirls like guilty memories of an afternoon that could've been spent more productively than clutching a remote control on the couch. "Passport" seems to accumulate force as one sequence of blips overtakes another and fading echoes spiral away from the core groove, so that the track's development feels like a traveler picking up resolve with every step of a journey. Listening to *You Don't Need a Key to Leave* is a bit like leafing through a stranger's diary: it feels quite personal, but since the writer didn't need to spell out all the action, you're left guessing as to just what it's about. —BILL MEYER

### NNAMDÌ, *KRAZY KARL*

Self-released

[nnamdiogbonnaya.bandcamp.com/album/krazy-karl](https://nnamdiogbonnaya.bandcamp.com/album/krazy-karl)

Our country has always privileged the powerful—a group that, historically and presently, has consisted almost exclusively of straight white men. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, they've only intensified their avaricious push to feed the rest of us into the grinder in order to prop up a broken, inhumane economic system. It can feel cartoonishly surreal to watch the government of the wealthiest country in the world use bullying and extortion to force schools to reopen when that's likely to cause catastrophic spikes in COVID deaths, while hospitality workers who can't afford to stay home risk their own health and that of everyone close to them in order to serve the affluent, say, a pastry that looks like a coronavirus particle. Chicago musical polymath Nnamdi Ogbonnaya, aka Nnamdi, couldn't do anything about the pandemic torpedoing his plans to tour and promote April's *Brat*, a tremendous experimental pop album he released through the label he co-owns, Sooper



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[oldtownschool.org](http://oldtownschool.org)



## MUSIC



Pacifica Quartet ■ LISA-MARIE MAZZUCCO

### continued from 33

Records. But he's used lockdown to release a flood of even newer music. In June, he dropped two singles and a righteous, rollicking postpunk EP called *Black Plight*, a response to the nationwide protests that erupted after a white cop killed George Floyd in May; the EP made more than \$10,000 the first day Nnamdi uploaded it to Bandcamp, and he donated it to local grassroots organizations Assata's Daughters and EAT Chicago as well as to individual Chicagoans in need. Earlier this month, Nnamdi self-released his second album of the year, the largely instrumental *Krazy Karl*. The title is an homage to *Looney Tunes* composer Carl W. Stalling, and the music's whimsical, quasi-symphonic mishmash of math rock, postpunk, and jazz reflects the animated energy of Stalling's anything-goes cartoon music. When you find yourself living in a society that primes people to complacently believe a New York City cop when he claims a Shake Shack employee poisoned his milkshake, sometimes the best way to cope is to embrace the absurdity—and Nnamdi does just that with the fractured, hectic melodies on "Milkshake Made My Tummy Hurt! It Must Be Poisoned!" Every time our country renews its commitment to bloodletting in the name of profit, the disjointed, uproarious chaos of *Krazy Karl* makes a little more sense. —LEOR GALIL

### PACIFICA QUARTET, *CONTEMPORARY VOICES*

Cedille

[cedillerecords.org/albums/contemporary-voices](http://cedillerecords.org/albums/contemporary-voices)

It might seem backhanded or cute to say that a Grammy-winning string quartet's 16th record has the feel of a second act. But that more or less describes the Pacifica Quartet's new release, *Contemporary Voices*. The album is the ensemble's second since they changed up their ranks; violinist Austin Hartman and violist Mark Holloway replace longtime members Sibbi Bernhardsson and Masumi Per Rostad, both of whom left the group in 2017. The album also feels like a sequel because the three pieces it collects are both too new to be widely recorded and too old to be completely unfamiliar. Only Shulamit Ran's *Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory* (2012-2013)—her third string quartet—is a world-premiere recording. The Pacifica

Quartet join it with Jennifer Higdon's satisfyingly contrasting *Voices* triptych (1993) and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's cosmopolitan Quintet for Alto Saxophone and String Quartet (2007), featuring dulcet-toned saxophonist Otis Murphy. Pacifica play like fencers—all reflexes and restraint, ceremony and choreography. So it was in the Bernhardsson-Rostad era; so it remains with Hartman and Holloway, though each set of players sounds a touch different in their inner-voice roles. Pacifica's interpretation of Ran's quartet foretells beautiful alchemies to come: *Glitter* is inspired by artist Felix Nussbaum, whose paintings became increasingly bleak and surrealistic as the Holocaust forced him out of Germany and eventually into hiding. (He was executed at Auschwitz in 1944.) At times the piece sounds like an aesthetic heir to the string quartets of Schoenberg and Bartók—nostalgic, sardonic, paroxysmal. That's apt enough: they too crawled from the rubble of a dying world and grasped for what was still living. —HANNAH EDGAR

### PARK NATIONAL, *THE BIG GLAD*

P Natty

[parknational.bandcamp.com/album/the-big-glad](http://parknational.bandcamp.com/album/the-big-glad)

Chicagoland multi-instrumentalist Liam Fagan is 18: young enough to treat emo bands who are still establishing themselves (particularly critical darlings Oso Oso) as aesthetic polestars, but also old enough to legally get the name of one of his favorite albums (the Hotelier's *Goodness*) tattooed on his arm. As the mastermind and sole musician behind Park National, Fagan has figured out how to cut his own path in emo. The project's recent debut, *The Big Glad* (self-released via Fagan's P Natty Records), relies on pop-punk propulsion, glistening loop-the-loop guitars, and enough hyperactive hooks to enrapture the most distractible listener—in other words, it ticks all the boxes for the emo subcategory known as sparklepunk. Though Fagan leans heavily on the subgenre's basic components, even his sloppiest melodies and quietest passages get an extra bump of personality from his youthful debonair streak—which also intensifies the feeling that he's onto something new. On "The Key," Fagan sings about interpersonal friction in terms vague enough that virtually everyone has wrestled with something similar, and his unvarnished, aggrieved





Vile Creature © DANIKA ZANDBOER

vocals might speak straight to you if you've ever had a falling out with a confidant. —LEOR GALIL

**PROTOMARTYR, *ULTIMATE SUCCESS TODAY***  
Domino  
[protomartyr.bandcamp.com/album/ultimate-success-today](http://protomartyr.bandcamp.com/album/ultimate-success-today)

These days, nihilism isn't a choice—it's a corner that we've boxed ourselves into in a feeble attempt to preserve some semblance of peace of mind. By 2020, Protomartyr had already spent more than a dozen years making malaise seem ineffably cool, with vocalist Joe Casey serving up tongue-lashings over gummy bass lines and bristling riffs. On the band's new fifth album, *Ultimate Success Today*, Casey confronts the decline of his own health alongside the decay of our planet due to human recklessness. In a bit of gallows humor in the press release for the album, he says he treated it like it might be the band's final act: "I made sure get my last words in while I still had the breath to say them." Casey's farewell letter reads like a laundry list of quagmires and calamities—rabid dogs and disease gnash through the anti-police dirge "Processed by the Boys," while the band must ward off black bile to make way for golden light in the acid-punk-tinged "Tranquilizer." *Ultimate Success Today* could have easily buckled beneath the weight of Protomartyr's dissatisfaction, but the Detroit four-piece enlisted a seasoned crew of guests to help shoulder the load, including improvising saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc, vocalist Nandi Rose (aka Half Waif), and cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm. Thankfully the extra hands don't distract the band from their postpunk whims: Casey still incants like a whiskey-sloshed soothsayer, and the two-man rhythm section still hot trots and syncopates with abandon. Had *Ultimate Success Today* been released in a year untouched by pandemic, rebellion, and locusts, it would've landed somewhere between cautionary tale and philosophical inquiry. Today it arrives like a wretched proof of life. —SHANNON NICO SHREIBAK

**VILE CREATURE, *GLORY! GLORY! APATHY TOOK HELM***  
Prosthetic

[vilecreature.bandcamp.com/album/glory-glory-apaty-took-helm](http://vilecreature.bandcamp.com/album/glory-glory-apaty-took-helm)

The new third full-length from Canadian doom duo Vile Creature, *Glory, Glory! Apathy Took Helm!*, is everything I hoped it would be. The queer vegan band, formed in 2014, draw their fierce, efficient, and elegant rage from their experiences of oppression and resistance, and they use it to build strong support structures for their bursts and blasts of raw power. The tolling, far-off twangs of guitarist and vocalist KW on the elegiac intro to "When the Path Is Unclear" set the stage for an impassioned monologue that begins as the song opens up into raw, churning fury: "You'd do well to take heed of the subtlety of the winding stream, the spider of subversion." Canadian all-woman choir Minuscule, founded by ukulele player Laurel Minnes, lend their dulcet tones to "Glory! Glory!," an almost divinely ethereal ode to the all-consuming power of nature that conveys the comforting sense that after death your essence as well as your decaying body will be reabsorbed by the environment. Never let it be said that Vile Creature don't provide moments of hope amid their all-too-accurate portraits of despair and fury: the apathy in the album title is not political indifference but rather the acceptance of death when the struggle is done, and the angelic choir on closing track "Apathy Took Helm!" sounds like a raging against the dying of the light. Drummer and vocalist Vic pummels the hell out of this record, as if they're trying to dig up an unquiet grave. And as though this magnificent album weren't enough, Vile Creature have also just released a collaborative single with Tanya Byrne of UK doom duo Bismuth (who added keyboards to "Glory, Glory!"). The primal, ritualistic drone banger "In Tenebris Lux" benefits Black Lives Matter-adjacent groups and UK environmental project Forest Carbon. Vile Creature met Byrne last year at the Roadburn Festival in the Netherlands, and the two bands later worked together on music commissioned by the 2020 edition of the fest, before the whole event was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Vic and KW contributed their vocals to "In Tenebris Lux" via digital methods, which might not be their favorite way of collaborating—but adaptability and acceptance of the current moment can lead to innovative, satisfying work. —MONICA KENDRICK

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# EARLY WARNINGS

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

ALL AGES FREE



Mavis Staples MYRIAM SANTOS

## NEW

... And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead 7/31, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.shop

Peabo Bryson, Will Downing 8/7, 8 PM, the Venue at Horseshoe Casino, Hammond  
Cellar Boys Trio 8/1, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn   
Circuit Des Yeux (solo performance and Q&A) 7/21, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com; a portion of the proceeds will be donated to Healthy Hood Chicago

Chris Daughtry 8/12, 8 PM, livestream at onlocationlive.com to benefit the Park West and its staff

Deer Tick & Friends In-Your-House-Party live from Fort Adams featuring Leon Bridges, Robert Ellis, Sharon Van Etten, Tallest Man on Earth, Courtney Marie Andrews 8/1, 7:30 PM, livestream at seated.com to raise money for the Newport Festivals Foundation

Dirty Heads perform Super Moon 8/7, 7 PM, livestream at veeps.com

James Elkington 8/1, 8:30 PM, livestream at youtube.com/user/constellationchicago  
Farewell to Varick Street featuring Joan Osborne, Lee Ranaldo, Robyn Hitchcock, James Maddock, Emma Swift, Joseph Arthur, Jill Sobule, Teddy Thompson, Rhett Miller, Jill Hennessy, Betty 7/31, 6 PM, livestream at citywinery.com

Michael Franti 8/15, 8 PM, livestream at michaelfranti.manheadmerch.com

Daryl Hall & John Oates, Squeeze, KT Tunstall 8/26/2021, 7 PM, Hollywood

Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park

Goran Ivanovic & Fareed Haque 8/5, 7 PM, City Winery

Brandon James 8/2, 2 PM, Reggie's Roof Deck

Lynne Jordan 8/3 and 8/10, 7 PM, City Winery

Dermot Kennedy 7/30, 3 PM, livestream at universe.com

Marcus King Band performs The Last Waltz with Jennifer Hartwick, Devon Gilfillian 8/3, 8 PM, livestream at marcuskingband.colortestmerch.com

Loose Assembly 8/15, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Mavis 80: a Newport Folk Revival featuring Mavis Staples, Jason Isbell, Brandi Carlile, Ben Harper, Trombone Shorty, Grace Potter, Phoebe Bridgers, Lucius, M. Ward, Joe Henry, and more 7/31, 7:30 PM, livestream at fans.com

Mimosa Me Please featuring Dott Daley, DJ Playmaka 8/9, noon, 2:30 and 5 PM, the Promontory

DJ Mr. Gac 7/31, 9 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Mt. Joy 7/23 and 8/6, 6:30 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com

Music Friendly Distancing featuring Helen Money and more 7/24, 5 PM, livestream performance from Money along with an interview and music video from a surprise guest; donations to the Empty Bottle Reopening Fund will be matched up to \$5,000 to benefit My Block My Hood My City. View at emptybottle.com/music-friendly-distancing

Pvris, Royal & the Serpent 4/7/2021, 8 PM, House of Blues

Ty Segall 8/12/2021-8/13/2021, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Snoop Dogg v. DMX 7/22, 7 PM, livestream at instagram.com/verzuztv

Staged presents Michigander 8/6, 9 PM, livestream at audiotree.tv

Steel Panther 8/16, 4 PM, livestream at steelpanther-rocks.com

Summer Sessions featuring Fresh Da Juice 7/31, 4, 6:30 and 9 PM, the Promontory

Tino & the Latin Swing Factor 8/2, 1 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Twin Talk 8/14, 8:30 PM, Constellation, in-person concert with concurrent livestream at youtube.com/user/constellationchicago, 18+

Mike Wheeler Band 8/7, 7:30 PM, Rosa's Lounge

Wiki, DeeJay Earl 12/5, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Lil' Ed Williams Blues Session featuring Lil' Ed and more 7/30, 7:30 PM, Rosa's Lounge

NOTE: Contact point of purchase for information about ticket exchanges or refunds.

AJR, Quinn XCII 8/8, 6 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion, canceled

Tatsu Aoki's Miyumi Project 7/31, 8:30 PM, Constellation, livestream at youtube.com/user/constellationchicago

Armor For Sleep 8/14, 7 PM, Metro, postponed until a date to be determined

Ólafur Arnalds 10/27/2021, 7:30 PM, Art Institute of Chicago, Rubloff Auditorium, rescheduled

Birthday Massacre, Julien-K 12/16, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock

Club, canceled  
Box Tops 8/23, 8 PM, City Winery, postponed until a date to be determined

Braids 9/10, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle, postponed until a date to be determined

Breaking Benjamin, Bush 8/6, 5 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, canceled

Brevet 4/9/2021, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, rescheduled, 17+

Chicago, Rick Springfield 8/1, 6:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont, canceled

CHIRP Record Fair and Other Delights 10/3, 8 AM, Chicago Journeymen Plumbers Local Union 130 Hall, postponed until a date to be determined in 2021

Cimafunk 9/6, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, postponed until a date to be determined, 17+

Dreary North Fest featuring Bastard Noise, Water Torture, and more 5/29/2021, 2 PM, Subterranean, rescheduled, 17+

Tinsley Ellis 3/8/2021, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, rescheduled

Rick Estrin & the Nightcats 8/7, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, postponed until a date to be determined

Robbie Fulks, Al Rose & Steve Doyle 4/16/2021, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, rescheduled

I Am Fest 8/15, 2:30 PM, House of Blues, canceled

Incubus, 311 8/28, 6:45 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, canceled

Jimmy Eat World, Front Bottoms 8/28, 6:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, canceled

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard, Leah Senior 10/16/2021, 7 PM, Radius Chicago, rescheduled; tickets purchased for the original and previously rescheduled date will be honored, 17+

Liturgy, Leya, Anatomy of Habit 8/21, 10 PM, Empty Bottle, canceled

Minks 8/12, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle, canceled

Nickelback, Stone Temple Pilots 8/29, 6:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, canceled

Not our First Goat Rodeo featuring Yo-Yo Ma, Stuart Duncan, and more 8/13, 6:30 PM, Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park, canceled

Off Broadway, Handcuffs 4/3/2021, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, rescheduled, 17+

Oston, Saint Nomad 8/27, 7:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, canceled

Judith Owen featuring Pedro Segundo 5/12/2021, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, rescheduled

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Chuck Prophet & the Mission Express 3/18/2021, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, rescheduled

Rascal Flatts, Chase Rice 8/27, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, canceled

Dan Rodriguez 5/22/2021, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, rescheduled

Sheila E. & the E-Train 9/13, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery, postponed until a date to be determined

Silverstein 2/9/2021, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, rescheduled; tickets purchased for original and previously rescheduled dates will be honored, 17+

Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes 5/17/2021-5/19/2021, 8 PM, City Winery, rescheduled

Spag Heddy, Effin 8/8, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, canceled

Dave Specter 8/17, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, canceled

Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives 4/18/2021, 3 and 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, rescheduled; 3 PM show sold out

Pablo Vittar, Tatiana Hazel 10/20, 9 PM, Metro, canceled

Warning, Junkbunny 10/23, 7 PM, Subterranean, canceled

Wednesday 13, Haxans 9/25, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, canceled

Wilco, Sleater-Kinney, Nnamdi 8/28/2021, 6 PM, Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park, rescheduled; tickets purchased for the original date will be honored

Winnetka Bowling League 10/3, 8 PM, Subterranean, canceled

Yam Haus 6/25/2021, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, rescheduled, 17+

UPCOMING

The Drive-In Fest featuring Lloyd, Bobby V, and more 8/22, 6 PM, Soldier Field South Festival Lot

NB Ridaz, Lil Rob 8/28, 7 PM, the Vic

Neck Deep 11/25, 6 PM, Radius Chicago

Haru Nemuri, Air Credits 9/5, 9 PM, Sleeping Village



## GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

LOCAL HIP-HOP GROUP He Who Walks Three Ways played a big role in developing the Chicago scene in the early 90s. In 1992, cofounder **Duro Wicks** launched a short-lived but crucial hip-hop weekly at **Lower Links**, which put a spotlight on HWWTW—they were big enough to open for the likes of the Pharcyde, Arrested Development, and A Tribe Called Quest. (**Lori Branch**, the DJ for the four-person outfit, had already secured her own legendary status when she became the first female house DJ.) Unfortunately, the group's music has been difficult to hear for decades, but last week HWWTW rapper **Juba Kalamka** posted **Technology Delivered 91/94** to Bandcamp. The name-your-price download compiles two demos: 1992's *Check Your Lips at the Door* and 1994's *Me, IBM and the Baby Jesus*.

When Gossip Wolf covered eclectic local cassette label **Lillerne Tapes** in 2012, the roughly 30 tapes it'd put out by then were mostly by midwestern weirdos. In the years since, Lillerne has hooked up with weirdos from all over, releasing more than 70 additional tapes—among them recent ambient projects from Australian composer **Jim Sellars** (aka **Yunzero**), Portland's **Fly Kin Mountain**, and Moscow artist **Yaffle**. Last week the label dropped a stacked compilation, **Lillerne #122**, whose 38 contributors include those folks plus Chicago jammers **RXM Reality**, **M. Sage**, and **Kindtree**. Bandcamp purchases of the comp benefit Black- and trans-led Hyde Park-based LGBTQ+ center **Brave Space Alliance** as well as **Urban Growers Collective**, who farm 11 acres in Chicago and "support communities in developing community-based food systems."

Last week, Chicago MC **Myquale** dropped the EP **Passport Package**, where he swerves suavely between rapping and singing atop a blend of Afro-pop, modern funk, and minimalist R&B. Myquale has the talent to transport you to serene climes, and we could all use a little vacation right now. —J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip\_Wolf or e-mail [gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com](mailto:gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com).

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## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

# The false hope of Ghislaine Maxwell's arrest

If history is any guide, Jeffrey Epstein's longtime partner is unlikely to pay the price for their crimes.

By **LEONARD C. GOODMAN**

*Leonard C. Goodman is a Chicago criminal defense attorney and co-owner of the newly independent Reader.*

With the July 2 arrest and indictment of Ghislaine Maxwell, the longtime partner of Jeffrey Epstein, the victims of their child sex-trafficking ring are once again being led to believe that the truth about the network of high-profile abusers and protectors will finally be revealed.

One victim, Maria Farmer, first reported Epstein's crimes to the FBI in the 1990s, but her reports were ignored. Maria is currently battling two forms of cancer. The arrest of Maxwell has given her renewed hope. "When you wait a quarter of a century for something, it's pretty exciting when it happens," she told the *Daily Beast* through happy tears. "I really feel hopeful that . . . maybe they'll go down the list of coconspirators." Another victim, Jennifer Araoz, said, "Maxwell was the center of that sex trafficking ring." Her arrest "means some justice for survivors can exist." Courtney Wild said that the arrest of Maxwell "gives me more confidence in our system."

In a previous column, I described how the federal government has covered up for Epstein and Maxwell and their coconspirators. Back in 2005, more than 30 child victims, some as young as 14 when they were recruited to become sex slaves for Epstein and his guests, were tricked into cooperating with the FBI, based on the promise that the U.S. attorney's office in south Florida intended to prosecute the Epstein-Maxwell child sex ring. Instead, the lead prosecutor on the case, Alexander Acosta, double-crossed the victims and entered into a secret and illegal deal to grant immunity to Epstein and all his "potential coconspirators." Acosta later

explained that he cut the nonprosecution deal with Epstein's attorneys because he had "been told" to back off, that Epstein was above his pay grade: "I was told Epstein 'belonged to intelligence' and to leave it alone."

The problem for the victims is that a deep dive into the Epstein-Maxwell network would implicate not just powerful men like Bill Clinton, who took at least 26 trips on Epstein's private jet—nicknamed the Lolita Express—but also untouchable U.S. intelligence officials like Michael Hayden, who was CIA director in 2007 when Acosta was told to "leave [Epstein] alone."

Thus, the government has gone to great lengths to avoid any detailed investigations into the criminal enterprise. Then in November 2018, a reporter from the *Miami Herald* embarrassed the government by identifying about 80 victims of the sex ring and by telling the story of how the victims were double-crossed by Acosta's office in 2007. In response to this series in the *Herald*, federal agents arrested Epstein last summer and charged him under the same indictment that had been drafted and shelved a decade before.

As a general rule, it is difficult to avoid deep dives into a case at a public criminal trial. Wealthy people like Epstein and Maxwell can afford to hire experienced criminal lawyers and investigators. At trial, they would have a strong incentive to expose the role of U.S. intelligence agencies as part of a potential public authority defense. Also, because this is a sex-trafficking case, it would be difficult for the CIA to simply classify all the evidence that links the agency to the defendant. This is a common tactic in terror cases where government lawyers typically argue that disclosure of any document about the CIA would be a threat to national security.

Any evidence that the CIA was working with Epstein by, for example, installing hidden cameras on his properties, or reviewing video footage involving world leaders like former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, would be devastating for the agency. The use of children to obtain *kompromat*—compromising information—on foreign leaders shocks the conscience. And most of the girls preyed upon by Epstein came from disadvantaged families or foster care.

It is widely reported that all of Epstein's properties were wired with hidden cameras. It is also generally understood that Epstein's tremendous wealth—estimated at a half billion dollars—was acquired through sexual blackmail of some of the richest and most powerful people in the world, including Leslie Wexner, founder of Victoria's Secret parent L Brands.

Robert David Steele, a former CIA officer, told a radio interviewer in 2017: "Many politicians have been compromised. It was a Mossad/CIA operation . . . There are videos of some of the most powerful players in the most humiliating positions. If this gets out, not only are the politicians ruined, but the extortion game is over and suddenly, the influence CIA and Mossad wield over Washington is gone."

Still, neither Congress nor the Department of Justice has made any effort to investigate the role of U.S. intelligence. This is not surprising. During the Obama administration, the only person prosecuted in connection with the CIA torture program was John Kiriakou, a CIA agent whistleblower who refused to participate in and helped expose the brutal, illegal, and ineffective program.

The danger that an Epstein trial posed for his powerful associates went away last summer when Epstein was found dead in his cell less than a month after his arrest. The official cause of death was suicide. But there are reasons to suspect that Epstein was murdered and that the crime was covered up. A forensic pathologist hired by Epstein's family described injuries—"three fractures in the hyoid bone, the thyroid cartilage"—that are "very unusual for suicide and more indicative of homicidal strangulation." "I've not seen in 50 years where that occurred in a suicidal hanging case," said Dr. Michael Baden, a former New York City medical examiner. Moreover, the two cameras outside Epstein's cell were broken, the two guards who were supposed to check on Epstein every half hour

both mysteriously fell asleep, and shrieking was heard coming from Epstein's cell on the morning of his death.

As for Maxwell, a full-blown public trial would also pose a threat to some powerful men. Two puzzling facts about the case, however, suggest that an honest account of the Epstein-Maxwell criminal network will not soon be forthcoming, even if she survives to see a trial. First, although her criminal partnership with Epstein spanned at least 20 years, the indictment focuses on just three years: 1994 through 1997. This is highly suspicious. It suggests that if the case were to go to trial, the government would try and limit the evidence to those years, thus protecting a person like Bill Clinton, who was a frequent passenger on the Lolita Express beginning in 2001, immediately after he finished his time as president. Further, the narrow time window suggests that the prosecutors in New York might be playing partisan politics by selecting the time period when Epstein was associated with President Trump, hoping to distract the mainstream press and the public with a Trump sideshow. Prosecutors in the Southern District of New York have publicly feuded with Trump, and one of the prosecutors listed on the indictment is the daughter of former FBI director James Comey.

Second, why was Maxwell, a citizen of three countries, living in the United States knowing that she would be arrested? This fact suggests that the government has already worked out a deal with Maxwell's lawyers that would likely provide little satisfaction or clarity to the long-suffering victims.

In a functioning democracy, the people would get to learn the truth about their government's involvement in criminal activity. But we live in a corporate state where the government serves the moneyed interests and regularly lies to the people. Our best source of information about government crimes has recently come from whistleblowers like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden. But the persecution of their publisher, Julian Assange, has made it harder to get the truth out to the people. The mainstream press has become a lapdog to power. Thankfully, the Internet has made it possible for alternative noncorporate outlets, like the Grayzone and Consortium News (and of course the *Reader*), to investigate and push back against official lies. Support independent media! 

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## OPINION



### SAVAGE LOVE

## If I'm in love, then why do I want to sleep with a hot barista?

The culture tells us cheating is a relationship-extinction-level event.

By DAN SAVAGE

**Q:** Is it terrible to believe you can still have a truly monogamous and loving relationship with one partner after 20 years? Or can we walk into a relationship knowing that within those decades of being together that situations like infidelity or being attracted to another is completely unavoidable? And if we acknowledge that in some cases it's truly unavoidable, should we mentally prepare ourselves for this possibility during our "monogamous" stage? Early on in dating? —**HOPELESSLY OPTIMISTIC PERSON ENQUIRES**

**A:** Be prepared.

Knowing what we do about infidelity and how common it is over the course of long-term relationships, HOPE, it's a good idea to have a conversation early in a relationship about what you will do if and/or when one and/or the other and/or both of you should cheat years or decades later. It's best for this convo to happen at the tail end of the infatuation stage, but before you've made any

sort of formal commitment—you know, after you've had your first fight but still at that stage when the thought of ever wanting to fuck someone else seems ridiculous. Committing at that point to at least trying to work through an infidelity doesn't guarantee the relationship will survive and it doesn't obligate you to remain in the relationship. But it ups the chances the relationship will survive an infidelity that it could and perhaps should survive.

Because remember, when it comes to cheating, some types are worse than others. There are differences in degree. If you found out your husband fucked your sister on your wedding night, well, that's probably not something you'll be able to forgive. But an instantly regretted one-off on a business trip (remember those?) or prolonged affair after 20 years and two kids and both partners long ago started taking their sexual connection for granted and both allowed it to wither? That's something you can work past and are likelier to work past if you agreed to

at least try to work past it before the kids and the taking for granted and the business trips.

Zooming out for a moment: The culture encourages us to see cheating as a relationship-extinction-level event—an unforgivable betrayal, something no relationship can survive. Which seems nuts when you pause to consider just how common cheating is. Defining cheating as always unforgivable sets up for failure otherwise good and loving relationships that might be able to survive an infidelity.

If instead of telling us that no relationship could ever survive an infidelity the culture told us that cheating in monogamous or nonmonogamous relationships is always serious betrayal—it's not at all trivial—but it's something a relationship can survive, HOPE, then more relationships that should survive infidelities would—I hope you're sitting down—actually wind up surviving infidelities. The truth is, many relationships don't just survive infidelities but actually thrive in the wake of the disclosure or expo-

JOE NEWTON

sure of an affair because the healing process brings the couple closer together. (This is not a good reason to have an affair, of course, nor is it the reason why anyone has ever had an affair.) Reinforcing the idea that affairs always destroy relationships: Couples who remain together after an affair usually don't talk openly about the cheating while couples who separate or divorce after an affair can hardly bring themselves to talk about anything else.

Now to quickly answer your first questions...

Yes, it is possible for two people to remain monogamous for 20 years. It can be done—of course it can—but there are lots of people out there who think they've done it but are mistaken. Some people who think they've been in successfully monogamous relationships for 20 years have been cheated on—or they themselves have done something their partners might regard as cheating—and the one-off infidelity or the ongoing affair or the happy endings were never exposed or disclosed.

And your partner is going to find other people attractive—and not in 20 years. Today, right now, your partner is going to lay eyes on someone else they find attractive, HOPE, just as you will probably lay eyes—but only eyes—on someone else you find attractive. Making a monogamous commitment doesn't mean you don't wanna fuck other people, it means you will *refrain* from fucking other people. If the lie we're told about love and attraction were true—if being in love with someone left you incapable of finding someone else attractive—we wouldn't need to make monogamous commitments. We wouldn't need to promise to not fuck anyone or extract that promise from someone else if being in love rendered us incapable of even

noticing how hot your barista is.

**Q:** What is the etiquette for breaking up with an escort you've been seeing regularly? A little background: I'm married and have been seeing an escort for the past three years about twice a month. The sex is amazing. We've developed a friendship and get along very well. The issue is that I've gotten emotionally attached. I constantly think of her and she's always on my mind. It's negatively affected my marriage and I need to break it off. I don't want to hurt her as I have genuine affection but I need to stop seeing her. Do I send a note with an explanation? Or do I ghost and stop sending her text messages? I'm the one who initiates contact. She never reaches out to me first. Thanks for your advice. —**IT'S ME NOT YOU**

**A:** Don't thank me, IMNY, thank all the nice sex workers and sex workers' rights advocates who were kind enough to share their thoughts after I tweeted out your question and asked #SexWorkTwitter to weigh in. The general consensus was for you to send a brief note letting this woman know you won't be booking her again. A short selection from the responses...

Kalee D. (@GoddessKaleeLA): "I've had this happen a few times before and the couple that wrote me a note with honesty were so deeply appreciated. The others, I always wondered what I did wrong or if they died in some freak accident."

Maya Midnight (@MsMayaMidnight): "I'd be worried if a longtime regular disappeared during a pandemic! Send a quick text or email saying you're taking a break but you've enjoyed your time together. No need for more detail about why. A parting gift would be a nice gesture."

SoftSandalwood (@Soft-

Sandalwood): "Pro Domme here. Definitely let her know what's going on, so she doesn't wonder if you're OK, if she did something wrong, etc. It's the job of a pro to understand and respect boundaries. Thanks for a thoughtful question."

Daddy Lance (@Lance-Navarro): "Agreed 100%. The majority of us are deeply empathetic and prefer closure over mystery."

A final thought from me: Sex workers value trustworthy regular clients, and FOSTA/SESTA and the coronavirus pandemic have made it incredibly difficult for sex workers to find new regular clients. Sending this woman a generous final tip—perhaps the price of a session, if you can swing it—would soften the blow of losing you as a regular client and would tide her over until she can replace you.

**Q:** That was great advice you gave to "Virgin" in last week's column. I was a 39-year-old virgin and started seeing sex workers. I found one that had the kind of qualities mentioned by the sex worker you quoted in your column. She was a kind, caring, and compassionate person that I saw regularly for a year. Being with her gave me confidence in my sexual abilities and allowed me to experience physical affection. A little while later I met my future wife. I was even able to tell her about my experiences with sex workers and she wasn't offended and didn't shame me. She was actually intrigued. I hope VIRGIN takes your advice. If he finds the right sex worker, like I did, it will change his life.

—**ONE GRATEFUL CLIENT**

**A:** Thanks for sharing, OGC! 📧

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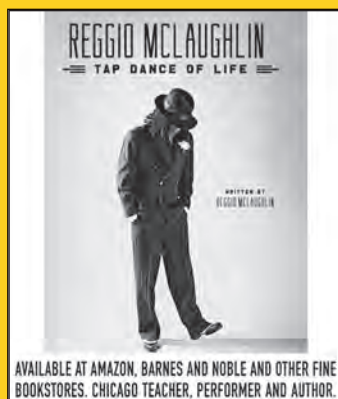
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